THE FLAWS OF LIBERAL NATIONALISM—ROBERT WRIGHT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Mark Strand on Edward Hopper • Paul Starr on Irving Kristol

THE CONTRACT WITH K STREET

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BY JOHN B. JUDIS

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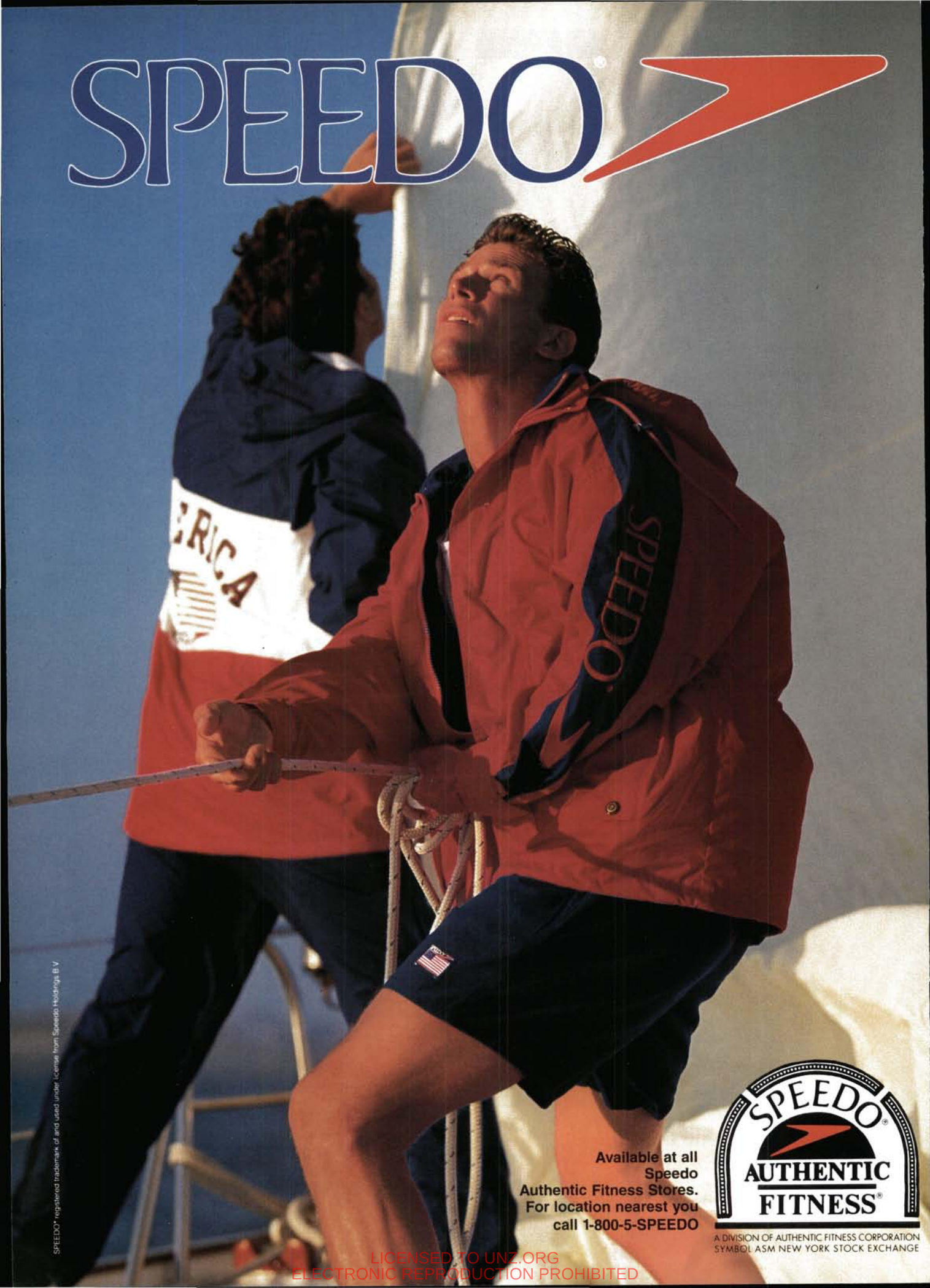

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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DECEMBER 4, 1995

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CORRESPONDENCE

Fatherhood

To the editors:

In your editorial on the Million Man March ("The Man and the March," November 6) you describe Louis Farrakhan's "idea of the black family" as "outdated and inegalitarian in the extreme." I do not like Farrakhan any more than you do, but as I listened to all the speeches delivered at that march, including Farrakhan's, paying special attention to any statements about fatherhood and family, I came away with a different conclusion. The "idea of the black family" celebrated repeatedly at the march was the idea of a two-parent, married couple in a religiously observant home in which the man is a loving husband and a strong, nurturing father. Is it the emphasis on marriage that you find "outdated and inegalitarian," or is it some other aspect of this message?

DAVID BLANKENHORN
New York, New York

Agents of predation

To the editors:

I take issue with Glenn C. Loury's suggestion in "One Man's March" (November 6) that "we now celebrate ... the arbitrary locking away for a lifetime of those who have made but three mistakes."

Our common language and the definitions of the law very clearly differentiate between mistakes, non-culpable, since unintentional, and intentional wrongdoing. The notion that our prisons are populated by victims of mistakes rather than by agents of predation, although, of course, popular among criminals, will do little to promote responsible citizenship and go a long way toward increasing the number of whites who fear, and of blacks who are victims of, crime.

MARTIN BAUERMEISTER
Wickford, Rhode Island

Sucking sound

To the editors:

It would appear from the November 6 issue that your journalists spent a lot of time hunting and fishing for some reason to find fault with the Million Man March. Conveniently, Louis Farrakhan became a very easy target to attack. Granted, the man is a bigot and a homophobe. However, what he says concerning the owners of businesses in poor black, ghettoized neighborhoods holds some truths. These businesses are largely liquor and wine stores that are largely owned by Jews, Asians, Koreans, Arabs and everyone else who looks nothing like the people that make up these low-income and poor urban areas. They will gladly sell cigarettes, fortified wines, overpriced food and other forms of liquor to keep their profit margins high. These businesses do not channel any money through charitable contributions for neighborhood clinics or to other organizations that support these neighborhoods and are trying to deal positively and effectively with the problems that are plaguing them. I am by no means an advocate of Farrakhan's hatred for people unlike himself; however, he is quite right when he terms these people "blood suckers." In reality, that is what they really are. They give less than a damn about the people that inhabit these neighborhoods as human beings. Their lives hold no value to them other than what they contribute to the business owners' bottom line. I can't think of a cogent explanation as to why these particular ethnic groups would want to have businesses in these areas other than to exploit what economic base there is in these downtrodden inner cities for their own economic gain. Unfortunately, blacks who would wish to open up businesses in urban ghettoized areas are usually redlined out by banks for small business loans, mortgages, etc. To call what these business owners do "capitalism" is an insult to the very meaning of the word. When was the last time any of your journalists visited an inner-city neighborhood anywhere in this nation and took a long and hard look at the people who inhabit these urban ghettos and the business owners who set up shop in them?

RICHARD BURROW
San Francisco, California

Insane asylum

To the editors:

Hanna Rosin ("Strange Days," November 6) praises Representative Lamar Smith's immigration reform bill for "streamlining" political asylum to punish no-shows. It does more than streamline the process: it lays it waste by setting a deadline that no mortal can meet, no matter how genuine the fear of persecution in the home country.

Regardless of English language deficiencies or difficulties in finding a lawyer or legal organization to help, the bill requires that the person in flight file a Notice of Intention to file the asylum application within thirty days of arrival, and file the application itself within sixty days of arrival. In twelve years of immigration practice, I have yet to find an asylum applicant who could negotiate the assertion of legal rights in a strange land within that short a time frame. The Smith bill would abrogate the asylum law without admitting it.

CARL R. BALDWIN
New York, New York

No good act

To the editors:

While I applaud you for remembering the extraordinary contributions of my friend and colleague, disaster relief specialist Fred Cuny ("Notebook," October 9), it was inappropriate and exploitative to use the recent commemorative gathering for Fred, which Anthony Lake attended as an invited guest, as a send-up for your criticism of the national security adviser. Mr. Lake was instrumental in galvanizing the search for Fred; the Cuny family was deeply touched by his presence. Apparently THE NEW REPUBLIC lets no good act go unpunished.

MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ
President, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Washington, D.C.

Golden years

To the editors:

In "The Gold Standard" (November 6) John B. Judis is disingenuous when he states that "most businesses" shied away from medical savings accounts (MSAs) "because MSAs didn't save them any money."

As a manager of a mid-sized business, I can attest to the fact that MSAs were never even on the agenda for most companies because—unlike comprehensive health insurance plans—employer contributions to an MSA are not tax-deductible. What business owner would even consider an option which automatically siphons off about thirty cents of every health care dollar?

Judis also distorts by singling out comparatively tiny Golden Rule for lobbying its pet cure to Republicans while ignoring the big guns who have for years lobbied comprehensive medical coverage to the Democrats.

Before the death of the Clintons' reform plan, for example, I recall seeing pro-Clinton ads in THE NEW REPUBLIC paid for by the "Alliance for Managed Care"—a.k.a. Aetna, Cigna, MetLife, Prudential and The Travelers—each company by itself a far larger and more potent lobbying force than Golden Rule.

I, for one, believe that MSAs deserve a shot—not because they "discourage policy holders from purchasing health

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care," as Judis puts it—but because they empower health care consumers to make price-sensitive decisions and remove expensive bureaucracy from routine purchases.

A local doctor, for example, routinely prescribes a $60 antibiotic for my child's ear infections. When I asked why, he said it sometimes works a little faster than the $12 medication he used to prescribe. Besides, he told me, "it's covered by insurance, so why worry."

Comprehensive insurance encourages waste like this. It's possible that MSAs might cut some of it out.

PETER BLAU
Weston, Connecticut

To the editors:

Perhaps if John B. Judis had taken time out from his ad hominem attack on Golden Rule Insurance Company, he might have understood the logic behind medical savings accounts.

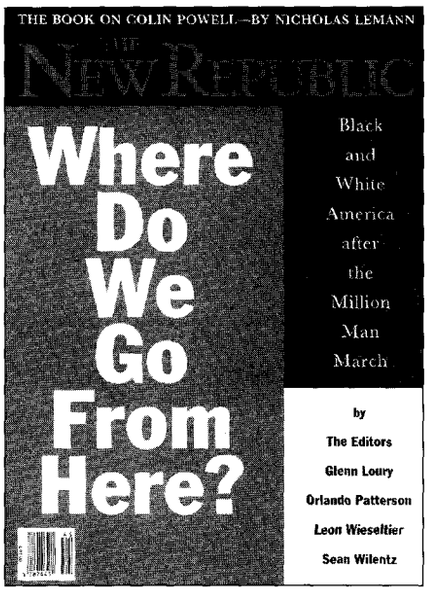
Medical savings accounts would establish an incentive for consumers to act more responsibly in purchasing health care services. There are numerous studies that show that health care consumers can make cost-conscious decisions when given a financial incentive to do so. For example, the Rand Corporation conducted a study of changes in people's health care decision-making based on the size of the consumer's copayment. The study found that an individual who had to pay 50 percent of the cost of health care spent 25 percent less than an individual with no copayment. The study also showed that those reduced expenditures are not caused by individuals' forgoing necessary or preventive care. (Health outcomes were virtually identical.) Rather, the savings result from reduced utilization of optional services and cost-based selection among competing providers.

Opponents of medical savings accounts, which include most big insurance companies as well as unreconstructed liberals, raise the issue of adverse selection, suggesting that medical savings accounts will appeal only to the healthy and wealthy. However, there is no evidence of adverse selection among the nearly 1,000 American companies currently experimenting with MSA-style insurance plans. By contrast, the medical literature is filled with studies demonstrating adverse selection in the managed care programs that Mr. Judis apparently finds appealing.

The reason is obvious. Copayments and deductibles under traditional insurance leave those workers with chronic conditions facing significant expenses every year. Under such a traditional policy, a worker with a $250 deductible and a 20 percent copayment up to $3,000 and a chronic condition costing more than $15,000 per year can anticipate paying $3,250 out of pocket every year. With an MSA, the worker would have little or no out-of-pocket expense. In addition, the likely alternative to MSAs, managed care, with its limits on the choice of physician and treatment and restrictions on access to specialists, can be deservedly unpopular with the chronically ill.

Ultimately, the health care debate is a question of liberty. Who should control health care dollars and decisions? Last year, President Clinton said it should be the government. Judis apparently believes it should be a handful of managed care insurance cartels. Supporters of medical savings accounts believe it should be 250 million American consumers.

MICHAEL TANNER
Washington, D.C.



To the editors:

John Judis wants you to believe that a money-grubbing insurance company (Golden Rule) devised medical savings account plans as a way to make an extra buck, started a think-tank-for-hire (that's us) to give the idea cover, then spent millions lobbying Newt Gingrich and the Republicans in search of a tax break.

Here is the real story:

The concept of MSAs was developed in the 1980s by academic health economists, with no input from the insurance industry.

The idea gained national recognition when it was endorsed by a task force of representatives from such think tanks as the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institution—none of which was receiving contributions from Golden Rule.

Long before the insurance industry paid attention to MSAs, the think tanks persuaded Gingrich, Dick Armey and others in both the House and Senate that MSAs were a good idea and that tax law discrimination against MSAs should end.

Following the publication by the Cato Institute of my book, *Patient Power*, MSAs were endorsed by the American Farm Bureau, the American Medical Association, the National Federation of Independent Business and many other grass-roots groups.

Fifteen states adopted MSA legislation (in some cases by unanimous votes), creating even more grass-roots pressure for federal action.

Only after it was clear that MSAs were viable politically did the insurance industry take notice. Most of the big companies initially opposed the idea because money in an MSA is money they don't get in premium income.

Far from starting the National Center for Policy Analysis, the chairman of Golden Rule briefly joined the NCPA board about the time of our seventh birthday. Through board meetings, briefings and seminars he learned about the MSA concept and began to offer them to company employees.

Golden Rule discovered that MSAs lowered health care spending and resulted in greater employee satisfaction and so decided to market the product even though tax law discriminates against them. Other insurance companies are doing the same.

When Democrats—hardly in the pay of Golden Rule—controlled Congress last year, MSAs were included in the Gephardt version of the Clinton health bill, and they were unanimously endorsed by Senator Kennedy's Labor Committee.

JOHN C. GOODMAN
President, National Center for Policy Analysis
Dallas, Texas

John Judis replies:

You can always find policy wonks who will argue for a specific initiative—but the reason Medical Savings Accounts got into the House bill was the millions spent by Golden Rule on candidates (including Democrats), lobbies and think tanks (including both Cato and the National Center for Policy Analysis). The precise idea for MSAs was adapted by Golden Rule's Pat Rooney from Goodman's more benign plan for health care IRAs. As Rooney told *The Indianapolis Star*, "The thing I did is I took that rudimentary idea and worked on it, and from there I developed the thing we call today medical savings accounts." The use of these accounts in Medicare would raise government costs and potentially create a two-tier system of medicine.

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FROM WASHINGTON

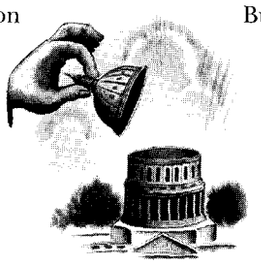
Trading places

"Why did we send them $50 billion? Because bonds were coming due, my friends! So we got the New York bankers—Citibank, Chase Manhattan and Goldman, Sachs—off the hook. But guess who's on the hook? You and your children and grandchildren!"
—Pat Buchanan on the Mexican bailout

It's possible for a politician to inflame base passions without saying anything technically untrue; there's no reason a demagogue has to be a liar. Still, it helps. Consider the above quotation, some variation of which Pat Buchanan utters every forty-five seconds or so.

First problem: of the $50 billion loan package that "we" gave to Mexico, $10 billion comes from Japan and Europe and another $2 billion from Canada and Latin America. That leaves $38 billion. Of that $38 billion, $20 billion comes from the U.S. and $18 billion from the International Monetary Fund. Since the U.S. provides one-fifth of the IMF's lending reserves, let's put $4 billion of that $18 billion on the U.S. tab. That leaves $24 billion as the total American contribution. So, right off the bat, Buchanan is telling a $26 billion lie.

And that's a conservative estimate. The "bailout" came as lines of credit, not loans. Since the $20 billion U.S. line was opened early this year, $13 billion has actually been borrowed. Of the IMF's $18 billion, Mexico has borrowed $11 billion, about $2 billion of which is theoretically on the American bill. So only about $15 billion has actually gone south from the U.S. In asking "Why did we send $50 billion" to Mexico, Buchanan is, strictly speaking, off by $35 billion.



And, of course, he typically fails to note that when we "send" money to Mexico we're *lending* the money (with interest), not giving it away. Indeed, saying that "your children and grandchildren" will bear the burden rather suggests the giveaway scenario. Listening to Buchanan, you'd never know that Mexico made its latest loan payment ahead of schedule, or that the American loans are secured by epic collateral—Mexico's oil reserves. (This arrangement, which includes routing Mexico's oil receipts through American hands, led Mexican Pat Buchanans to complain about the surrender of Mexico's sovereignty.)

I suppose I'm splitting hairs. After all, "$15 billion" would get Buchanan about as much applause as "$50 billion." Besides, the whole point of Buchanan is entertainment, right? He's always been a sideshow, and a good one. But Buchanan is now number two in the New Hampshire polls, and he's insisting that we start taking him seriously—as the "real conservative" who could challenge Bob Dole. So, okay, I'm taking him seriously.

The larger reason to take Buchanan seriously is that he is, alas, a sign of things to come. As various people have noted, the nationalism-internationalism polarity could realign American politics. Buchanan personifies this prospect. In a general election, he, more than Dole or Phil Gramm, would challenge Clinton among blue-collar Democrats. Meanwhile, his protectionism and isolationism would alienate some Republicans, driving them into the Clinton camp. And who's to say that the resulting allegiances wouldn't form a more stable party system than the current one, which finds both parties divided over trade and foreign military entanglements?

Or, for that matter, why not flip the axis in the other direction, and make the Democrats the nationalists and the Republicans the internationalists? That was the question raised some months back, when this magazine ran a cover story touting an allegedly liberal "new nationalism." The striking thing about this new agenda was how much of it echoed Buchanan, if in milder terms: raise tariffs selectively, reduce military involvement abroad and perhaps slow immigration to protect low-wage, American-born workers. There were stark differences, to be sure. The "liberal" nationalism includes much more progressive taxation than the Republican version Buchanan embraces, though a third-party Buchanan might come around on this issue. And, of course, "liberal" nationalism would be liberal on

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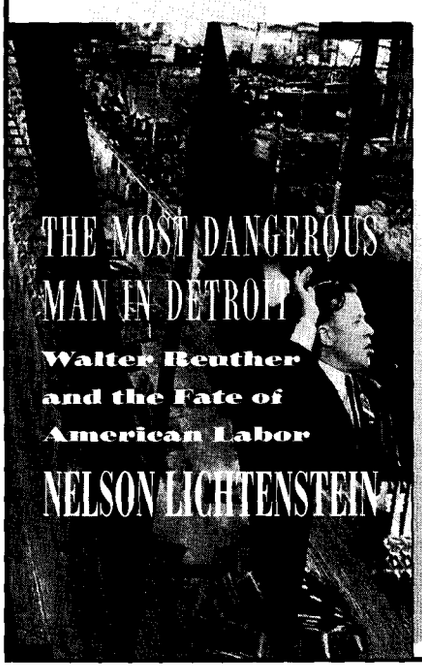
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LABOR LIBERALISM IN AMERICA?



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 4, 1995

TAX EVASION

No part of the GOP's agenda is more onerous than its $245 billion tax cut. While some GOP spending cuts represent a serious effort to impose discipline on a budgetary system that for years has run on automatic pilot, the tax cut is an old-style payoff, a political door prize for constituencies that frequent the Republican tent.

The $500-per-child credit that represents roughly two-thirds of the tax cut is essentially a thank-you present to the Christian right, an expensive nod to family values. What Ralph Reed would really like from Congress is public money, in the form of vouchers, for parochial schools. But, until the Supreme Court says that's okay, the GOP is willing to spend large sums on a tax credit that makes it harder to balance the budget, and that even right-wing economists admit will do nothing for economic growth. Sure, some of the tax credit's backers half-heartedly claim that it will lead families to save more. But, unlike competing proposals that require parents to use federal tax relief to set up retirement funds for their kids, mom and dad can blow the GOP's credit on whatever they like. And if anyone wanted further evidence that the tax credit is based on political influence rather than need, just look at who won't get it. The credit is non-refundable. You write it off your taxes. If, however, you are too poor to pay taxes (the condition, for instance, of a two-child family earning $20,000 and receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit), you don't get any money.

For Wall Street, another core GOP constituency, Newt and company offer another morsel: the chance to exempt roughly 50 percent of their capital gains earnings from federal taxes. If any proposal shows that the Republicans have abandoned shared sacrifice, it is their resurrection of a cut in the capital gains tax. A reduction in the top rate, while benefiting the rich, would be fairer. Capital gains reductions, by contrast, violate the principle that the government should leave economic allocation to the market rather than favor one form of investment over another. By creating artificial incentives, such a cut would reintroduce the elaborate, wasteful financial chicanery that the 1986 tax reform sought to eliminate.

There is more. Newt and company would increase the estate tax exemption, allowing an individual to inherit $750,000 tax free, up from the current $600,000. Although estate limits are rough on people who stand to inherit businesses (family farmers, say) it's hard to justify that one to the truly disadvantaged. And the Republicans would open up tax-deferred IRAs to individuals making $95,000 a year. Currently they are restricted to those earning under $25,000.

These fiscally incoherent gifts to Republican constituents stand in stark relief when set against the GOP's reduction of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Since the EITC refunds money to those with meager incomes, its rollback means a tax increase for the working poor. Indeed, Republican tax "cuts" will have the overall effect of raising taxes on average for families making under $30,000 a year. And, since the EITC provides money only to the poor who work (one reason Presidents Reagan and Bush expanded it, and Gerald Ford first signed off on it), its reduction will make welfare more attractive.

Phil Gramm and the zealous House freshmen who cowed the more responsible in their party into accepting the $245 billion tax cut argue that these tax cuts will boost the economy and provide more freedom to individuals. In reality, they go a long way toward preserving the political status quo. And they let Democrats off the hook. After all, why should Democrats give up their pork when the Republicans are distributing bigger chunks to constituents who eat better already? The Republicans' "revolutionary" tax cut isn't revolutionary at all; it's business as usual. •

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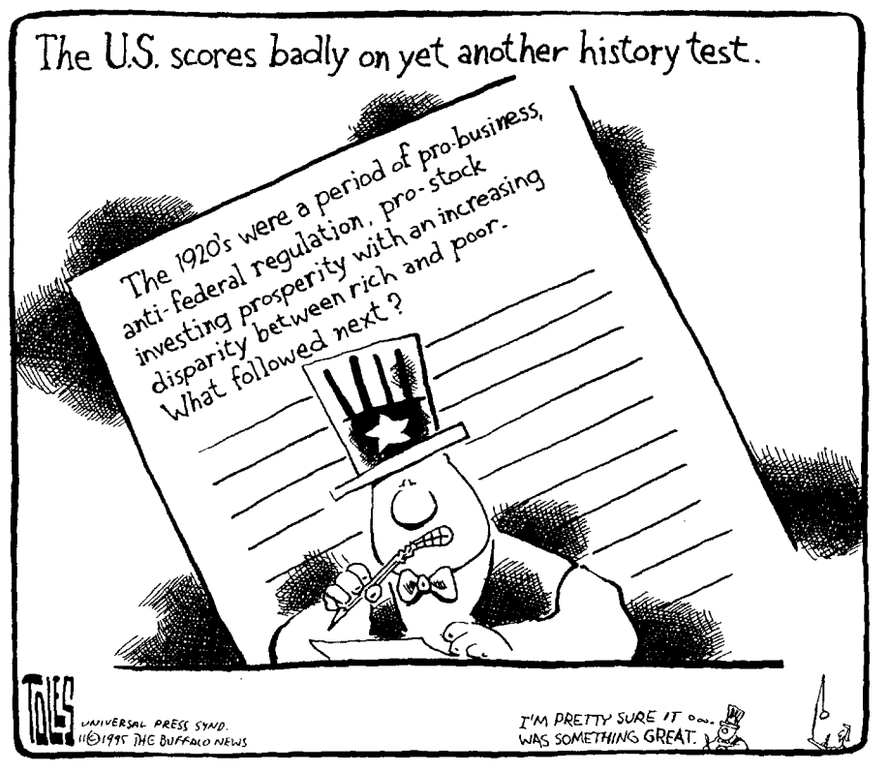
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: A convicted murderer in Springfield, Illinois, argued that his bad heart makes him unfit to be executed.... A mailing from Phil Gramm's presidential campaign detailed the "ethical problems" of Lamar Alexander, including "Incidents such as pelting out-of-state cars with snowballs [that] earned Alexander at least two paddlings in school." ... Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole admitted that he colors his hair "a little".... Crayola is replacing some food-scented crayons with new aromas such as baby powder, leather jacket, new car and dirt.... Utah Republicans are proposing that the state buy babies from unwed pregnant women for $3,000 to discourage abortions.... Appearing with her husband on the syndicated program "Hard Copy," Marianne Gingrich explained, "I'm a small-town girl, and I still feel that no matter what, there's still a little hayseed coming out of my mouth, and I still enjoy being barefoot."


The U.S. scores badly on yet another history test.
The 1920's were a period of pro-business, anti-federal regulation, pro-stock investing prosperity with an increasing disparity between rich and poor. What followed next?
I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS SOMETHING GREAT.
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FURTHER STUDY: The White House did opponents of welfare reform a big favor when it tried to hush up a study by the Department of Health and Human Services of the reform bills passed by the House and Senate. The HHS document was leaked to *The Los Angeles Times* and became a big deal. And the study's conclusion—that the Clinton-endorsed Senate bill could drive 1.2 million children into poverty—has been treated in the press as near-unassailable expert calculation. It isn't. True, the GOP bills are seriously underfunded, containing large cuts in Food Stamps as well as the basic welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). That's hardly likely to *decrease* poverty, at least in the short run. But the HHS report attempts to estimate the inestimable, namely what will happen to the welfare population if Congress frees every state to do with AFDC what it chooses. The answer is nobody knows. Some states might end welfare entirely. Some will shave benefits, others impose time limits. Wisconsin plans to create a large public work program. Many of these changes have never been tried. The HHS experts were only able to come up with their "1.2 million" number by making some heroic and highly debatable assumptions. A few of these were generous, but one big one wasn't: HHS assumes that all the various state work programs and time limits will have no effect on the behavior of welfare recipients until they have been on the rolls for five years, at which point the study assumes they will be cut off, and a mere 40 percent of them will take jobs. Yet the whole point of welfare reform is to change the behavior of would-be recipients *before* that five-year limit is reached. There is some evidence—from Wisconsin, among other places—that time limits do encourage people to leave welfare for work sooner, or to not go on welfare in the first place. As Senator John Breaux has charged, the HHS study "assumes essentially that the welfare reform is going to fail." The study also completely ignores the effect of the $3 billion in extra child care money added to the Senate bill by Democrats. After all, HHS reasons, the child care money will only help states enforce work requirements—which, the study decrees, will have no effect! Finally, the study is blind to the social benefits of work. It only measures money. But which is better for a child: living in a working family with a parent who holds down a full-time job and earns 99 percent of a poverty-line income, or living with a single mother totally dependent on Food Stamps, welfare and housing benefits that total 101 percent of poverty? HHS counts the first family as a social failure and the second as a shining success. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who has been promoting the HHS report, should know, cash income is not the only thing that's important for children.

TELEMARKETING: One of the fears echoed by groups opposing the proposed 1995 Telecommunications Act is that it would accelerate the concentration of

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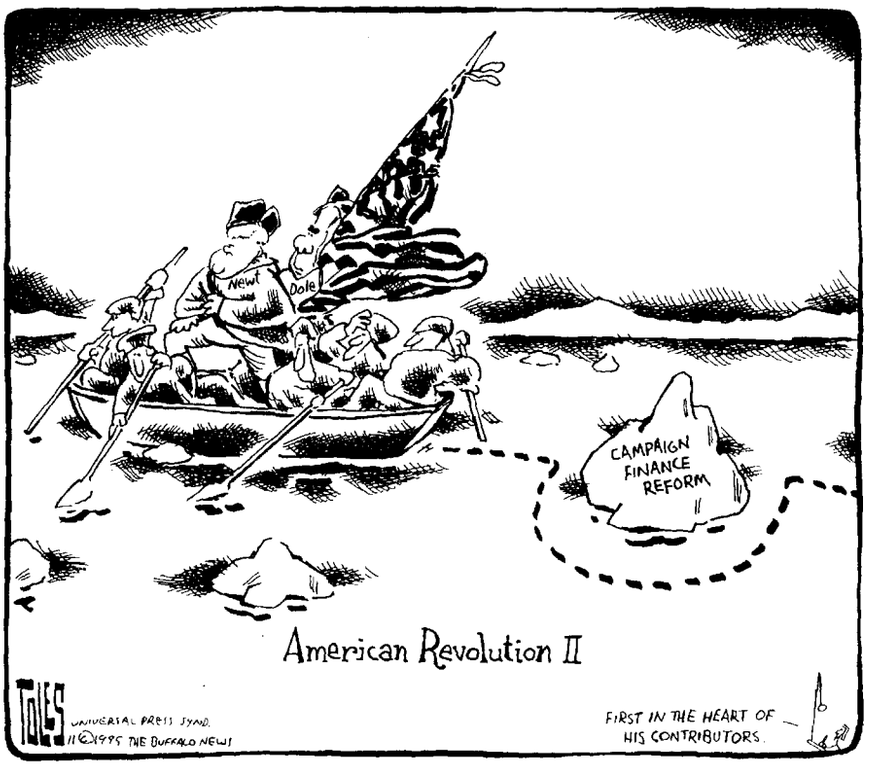
media into the hands of a privileged few: among the deregulatory measures buried in the bill, for example, is a provision allowing for a substantial increase in the number of radio and television stations a single corporation can own. Nonsense, says Senator Larry Pressler, a South Dakota Republican and sponsor of the telecom legislation. But an examination of the debate surrounding the bill persuades us otherwise. CNN refused to broadcast ads criticizing the legislation, citing a conflict of interest with its parent company, and telecom bill supporter, Time Warner. And Pressler, in a quite unusual move, tried to persuade a fierce opponent of the bill, AT&T, not to air advertisements critical of the legislation on the grounds that they were "misleading." In a formal statement, Pressler added, "I questioned whether such negative advertising contributes to the public's understanding of these matters, and further suggested that the ads confuse rather than clarify the complex issues involved...." Thanks, senator, for once again reminding us of the dangers of prohibiting speech. And we eagerly await your ads come election time.



THINGS FALL APART: The flurry of protest occasioned by last Friday's state murder of playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria says something both heartening and deeply sad about Africa's place in the post-cold-war world. Western leaders, who would once have averted their eyes to state repression in a cold war ally, spoke quickly and forcefully on behalf of human rights. The U.S. withdrew its ambassador and halted further arms sales. The World Bank withdrew a proposed loan. The spectacle was inspiring. But it was also tragic, because it reflects the depth of Nigeria's irrelevance. The West has given up coddling African dictatorships, but it has largely given up on helping African countries to develop as well. U.S. policy toward Nigeria, which centers mostly on preventing its desperate people from immigrating, increasingly resembles GOP policy toward inner-city Detroit: try to fence it in and keep its decay from spreading. Nigeria still pumps some oil, but, once it exhausts this resource, it will disappear from international trade and capital flows altogether. This is why it was so easy for Western countries to make their stand for human rights. They were cutting aid anyway. In the last couple of years, foreign assistance to Africa has taken a huge hit both in the U.S. and Europe, and this goes for aid to democracies as well as dictatorships. If, by some miracle, Nigerians overthrow the military and find honest politicians to take over, it is very unlikely they will get the support they need to rebuild. And, without the money to buy off Nigeria's vastly heterogeneous communities through patronage, a new government would find it difficult to keep the country together and avoid Somalia-style fragmentation. That's post-Abacha Nigeria. Until then, the world can be both morally indignant and indifferent at the same time.

NOW THEY TELL US: In its editorial denouncing President Clinton as craven for his willingness to sign the Senate's welfare bill, *The New York Times* compared it unfavorably with Clinton's own 1994 plan, which the *Times* called the "legislative high point of his presidency." If only the *Times* had been so appreciative in 1994, when it mattered. Clinton's "reform plan comes up short," the *Times*'s editorialists sniped in June 1994, after the proposal was unveiled. The plan's "major novelty"—a two-year time limit—was "asking for trouble." Indeed, the president made a "sensible choice" not to "push hard to pass" his plan, since "welfare reform [had] no pressing political deadline" and Congress "could use" 1995 to correct his "missteps." Wrong! Given this spotty track record, a little lower dudgeon on the part of Howell Raines & Co. would be appreciated.

ONE NATION: TNR is pleased to announce the publication of contributing editor Stanley Crouch's new book of essays, *The All-American Skin Game, or, The Decoy of Race* (Pantheon Books). •

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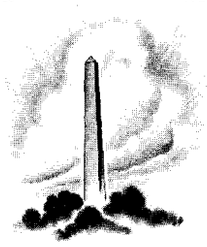
WASHINGTON SCENE

RUN DLC

By Matthew Cooper

It was like a scene out of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*. There's the Democratic Leadership Council gathered in Washington for its annual meeting, moderate "New Democrats" all. But at the opening session, Washington's mayor, Marion Barry, the quintessential Old Democrat, doesn't get the hint. Instead of waving humbly when he's given a perfunctory introduction from the podium, Barry strides on stage. DLCers are startled. Most speakers offer a nuanced Third Way between right and left. Barry issues a rousing, partisan call for "recapturing" Congress.

It was a reminder that the DLC faces many obstacles. There are still plenty of liberals in the Democratic Party, and even as the DLC develops a host of new and provocative ideas for governance, it still has a big organizational problem. It has yet to build a mass movement able to harness the political anger that's roiling the country, from Buchanan-style xenophobia to Perotian attacks on the Beltway to black nationalism.



The DLC itself was born of anger. In 1985, a slew of Democrats, many of them Southern, came together after Walter Mondale's disastrous forty-nine-state loss to Ronald Reagan. (Ironically, Mondale's oldest son, Ted, a Minnesota state senator, is a DLC member.) Not surprisingly, the group was derided by the Left as the "Democratic Leisure Class." The moniker wasn't entirely unfair. In its earliest days, the DLC was identified with a soft, Southern centrism, deferential to business, lacking bite.

No more. With the development of its own think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute, the DLC, under President Al From, has become the leading intellectual force not only in the Democratic Party but for anyone who believes government is not terminally hapless. Conservatives, once buoyed by the Heritage Foundation, were outshone by PPI. Take Robert Shapiro. A PPI fellow (and contributing editor of TNR), he proposed slashing farm subsidies, which led Bob Kerrey in 1992 to accuse recently departed DLC head Bill Clinton of wanting to wreck the family farm. (Today, Kerrey's pro-DLC—and a sanctimonious booster of cutting entitlements.) A more recent Shapiro paper, "Cut and Invest," sparked a national debate about corporate welfare. On issues from job creation to the environment, the PPI really did find a Third Way that was both hardheaded and kindhearted.

With so much success, you'd think the DLC would be riding high. But the DLC's ambivalence about Clinton has been palpable. It knocked his health care plan. It chided him for waiting so long to reform welfare. Good calls both, but, at times, the criticism seemed untoward. Just last year, hours before he was to address the DLC, the group's then-head, Dave McCurdy, slammed Clinton for having "the mind of a New Democrat [but] the heart of an Old Democrat."

The president was angry and rightfully so. (After all, the DLC is never going to do better than Clinton.) For the most part, the DLC's rhetoric bears a resemblance to that of conservatives who whine about the liberal establishment, even though liberals are on the run. It would behoove the DLC to nurture liberals rather than chastise them. One of the wisest points made at this week's DLC conference came from Milwaukee Mayor and DLC member John Norquist: "If the DLC's goal is to hold activists in contempt, it's doomed.... You need them to lick the stamps, to fold the letters." At times the DLC's distinction between bad Old Democrats and good New Democrats descends into sophistry. Barbara Mikulski was one of several "New Democrats" feted by the DLC at their recent meeting. Yet Mikulski's Senate record is traditional liberal—save for her support of national service, a program that burns so bright in the DLC constellation that anyone who supports it becomes a member of the club. And on welfare, who's to say what's "New"? Clinton's original welfare plan was designed by DLC veteran Bruce Reed. It was hardly liberal. When the Senate passed a much tougher bill, repealing welfare's entitlement, the DLC praised it, too.

The DLC also has yet to hone its legislative skills. When it came to their beloved national service plan, the DLC was on the sidelines. Consider when Clinton presented his bill to Congress in 1993. As national service worked its way through Congress, liberals emphasized the anti-poverty aspects of the program rather than what the DLC liked: national service's ability to bring persons of different classes together. In his book on national service, *The Bill*, my friend Steven Waldman applauds the DLC for being the driving intellectual force behind national service, but notes that traditional liberals had more adroit legislative skills.

But if the DLC has been a minor player in Congress, it's been AWOL when it comes to building a grass-roots movement. It's telling that several of today's most important political movements were born in the mid-'80s: the DLC (1985), the Rainbow Coalition (1986), the Christian Coalition (1989) and Newt Gingrich's takeover of Pete DuPont's little-known GOPAC (1986). The Christian Coalition was once laughed-off. It became a passionate cause in American life with 1.6 million members. GOPAC seemed idiotic, too. It became a brass-knuckles school for aspiring Newts and helped elect the 1994 Congress. The DLC is more powerful than the Rainbow Coalition, which turned into a cult of personality around Jackson. But the DLC never forged a popular base.

That's changing. This year's DLC meeting had far more state representatives and regular folk and far fewer

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of the lobbyists who dominated earlier conventions, although corporate money still fuels the DLC. Senator Joseph Lieberman, the DLC's chair, even wants to start a DLC political action committee. "We've got to do more," says Lieberman. No kidding. Consider how the GOP reached out to Utah State Senator George Mantes. Mantes was working at his Chevy dealership earlier this year when Gingrich called, urging his support for the Contract. Mantes is a DLC Democrat, but, as a businessman, his name merited a call, even in Tooele, Utah. The Republicans, Mantes sighs, "really do their homework." •

THE PRESS

BAD CARMA

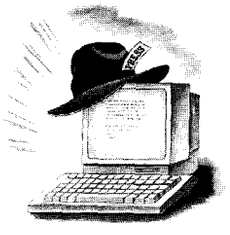
By Howard Kurtz

You're the chairman of Toxic Sludge Incorporated, and you've been getting kicked around by the press. Cynical reporters don't seem to appreciate your sensitive approach to sludge or your dedication to creating dirty jobs at good wages.

Hey, it must be a p.r. problem. What you need is a company that will charge you big bucks to scrutinize those pesky journalists and figure out who's naughty and nice.

Memo to the chairman: forget it. All the media analysis in the world is not going to bring you glowing headlines. Sludge is sludge. Get over it.

The Wall Street Journal caused quite a stir the other day with the revelation that the Energy Department had spent $43,500 on a company that ranks reporters according to whether their stories are positive or negative. This turns out to be a booming business; Carma International, the DOE contractor, also services such clients as Microsoft, Philip Morris, the National Rifle Association and Major League Baseball.



What such contracts represent is the triumph of the spin doctors, who already rule politics and are now spreading their gospel throughout the corporate world. The presumption is that there are no bad policies or inept management, only flawed p.r. strategies. Bill Clinton, three years into a troubled presidency, concludes that he's got a "communications" problem; Bill Gates seems to be buying into the same mentality. Congress slashing your budget? Public doesn't love you? It's The Press, Stupid.

Thus, Carma tells the Postal Service that it gets worse press coverage in Washington than in New York or Chicago—a no-brainer when you stop to consider that the agency's D.C. mail service is among the worst in the nation. Kind of like telling the folks at Chernobyl that they've got an image problem.

The plain fact is that some high-powered public relations firms are running a scam when they claim that, like modern alchemists, they can turn bad press into good. They whisper that they can obtain "access" to reporters, "place" op-ed pieces, get the client's "message" out. While savvy publicists can indeed be helpful, the notion that corporate or government officials can't get the very same reporters on the phone is, frankly, nonsense.

There's nothing wrong with what Carma calls "content analysis"; anyone is free to evaluate, criticize or denounce the work of reporters, as millions do every day. But this isn't brain surgery. A government or company flack who needs an outside study to determine who's doing a good job covering his office must be sleepwalking through history.

Keep in mind that what a client deems "negative" coverage may merely be perfectly neutral coverage of stupid or nefarious doings. The coverage of Watergate and Iran-Contra was negative. Bob Packwood got lots of negative press. So did O.J. Simpson. And it wasn't because they didn't have smart image-meisters to take reporters to lunch and convey the proper spin.

But some companies shroud the process in mystery. In a typical report for the DOE, Carma said: "Mary Manning of the *Las Vegas Sun* penned 11 articles that rated a 46.8, making her the leading unfavorable byline." From another report: "The agency argument 'The DOE should be eliminated' was the leading unfavorable message, with 42 appearances and a 41.4 rating."

Psst! You can do the same thing by reading the papers. Or tapping into an electronic database like Nexis.

Albert Barr, Carma's president, says he simply tries to make sense of a media-saturated world: "It helps my clients be a lot more articulate and effective in talking to people. We try to help them get an indication of where the person is coming from historically and has their slant been favorable or unfavorable."

Not all p.r. people see the point. "I do not need an outside outfit to rate reporters," says Herb Linnen, media relations director for AT&T. "I deal with them every day. I know what reporters want. Basically they want detailed information as fast as they can get it."

Consider some of the stories that resulted in Bad Carma. Sloppy Energy Department monitoring at weapons plants caused some people to be exposed to radiation. The government conducted secret radiation tests on unwitting subjects during the cold war. The department can't figure out where to store plutonium. Only card-carrying bureaucrats could decide that the solution was to blame the messenger. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, a former utility company executive, initially defended the Carma concept, until her job appeared to be in jeopardy. Then she said she was "chagrined and embarrassed" by the contract. Coverage of her comments, under the Carma code of conduct, would be rated zero.

Or consider the "Top 25" rankings of the sources quoted by the press. The most favorable source was—

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duh—Hazel O'Leary. Least favorable? Bob Dole, who wants to abolish the department.

Still, let's assume that DOE officials were too busy looking for plutonium storage sites to read the papers, and that the contractor provided a reasonably accurate snapshot of the coverage. What do you do with the nattering nabobs of negativism? Barbara Semedo, the DOE press secretary, told the *Journal* the negative ratings indicated that "we weren't getting our message across, that we needed to work on this person a little." With what—a rubber hose?

Now we come to the real fallacy in this press strategy, the notion that reporters can be summoned to some sort of re-education camp. Of course, offended officials could declare the worst journalists persona non grata and refuse to talk to them, perhaps even bring in the IRS, another Carma client. But that sounds rather Nixonian, and it's hardly going to stop *The New York Times* or the Associated Press from covering the agency.

Another possibility is to lavish extra attention on recalcitrant journalists in an effort to help them see your point of view. But you don't need "computer-aided research and media analysis" (Carma's full name) to do that, and reporters are understandably skeptical of too much tender loving care from the folks they cover.

The only way the ratings game makes sense is if the department is going to leak to its most favored journalistic customers and stiff its harshest critics. No one will admit that, of course, and such attempts have brought mixed results at best. The critics are likely to redouble their efforts, and even the most sympathetic reporters can't turn a blind eye to misfeasance and malfeasance. Not if they want to be rated highly by those who matter most: their bosses and their readers.

HOWARD KURTZ is *The Washington Post*'s media reporter.

Why his legacy will survive.

RABINICAL

By Gershom Gorenberg

"After death, say they're saints," goes a Hebrew adage. Yitzhak Rabin has quite literally become an Israeli saint, and the night of his assassination a passion drama. The mass-circulation *Yediot Aharonot* displayed on its front page the blood-soaked, bullet-punctured copy of "Song of Peace" from which Rabin sang moments before his martyrdom. In Tel Aviv, the center of Israeli secularism, the square where the prime minister was shot has become a holy site, where believers sit by memorial candles and sing pop dirges.

I understand the response. But, as myths do, this one gets in the way of political analysis—of Rabin, and of what comes after.

Ever since the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles was signed two years ago, conventional wisdom among Israeli analysts and journalists has been that the Oslo process created "a marriage, rather than a divorce." The interim agreements demand complex cooperation in administering the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Jewish settlements remain in place while Palestinian rule is set up around them, and Palestinians continue crossing an unmarked border into Israel. It would have been preferable, thought many observers, myself included, to go straight for a final-status agreement, agree on a border and get Israel out of Palestinians' lives. But Rabin, as usual, was cautious to a fault.

In the last week of October, the picture started looking different to me. I was interviewing Israelis and Palestinians about the future of the West Bank settlements. Their responses suggested that the phased process was having the hoped-for psychological effect: a growing realism that would make final-status talks easier.

As Khalil Shikaki, head of a respected think tank in Nablus, put it, "We have to address the needs of both communities," Israeli and Palestinian. Shikaki, who belongs to the pro-peace process mainstream, said he expected Palestinians to insist on sovereignty over the West Bank—but that he supports letting settlers stay where they are, "without even becoming Palestinian citizens." Daoud Kuttab, a prominent journalist who also backs the process, went further: "It seems to me that Palestinians would not be excited about a strip of land [in the West Bank] where the majority of residents were Israelis, if equitable compensation in territory or other ways were made."

On the Israeli side, Health Minister Ephraim Sneh, a close ally of Rabin, said that, while the dismantling of settlements was unfeasible, he sees "Palestinian sovereignty over most of the West Bank as inevitable." So under the final status, he said, "the settlements will remain as Israeli enclaves in Palestinian territory." Though a gap remains even between moderates on the two sides, Israelis and Palestinians are inching away from the old psychology of negotiating with themselves. Since Oslo, the other side has become flesh and blood—a clear achievement of Rabin's go-slow approach.

Rabin was less successful at gaining domestic support. The prime minister was consistently closemouthed about his final plans for Israel's borders. His most detailed statement came a month before his death, in the Knesset debate on the Oslo II accords. Rabin said that the large suburbs near Jerusalem would remain in Israeli hands and that certain other settlements east of the pre-1967 line would be annexed. Even that formula left much to the imagination: few Israelis felt they knew which settlements Rabin would give up.

Five days before the assassination, I spoke to Rabin's spokeswoman, Aliza Goren. The prime minister, she

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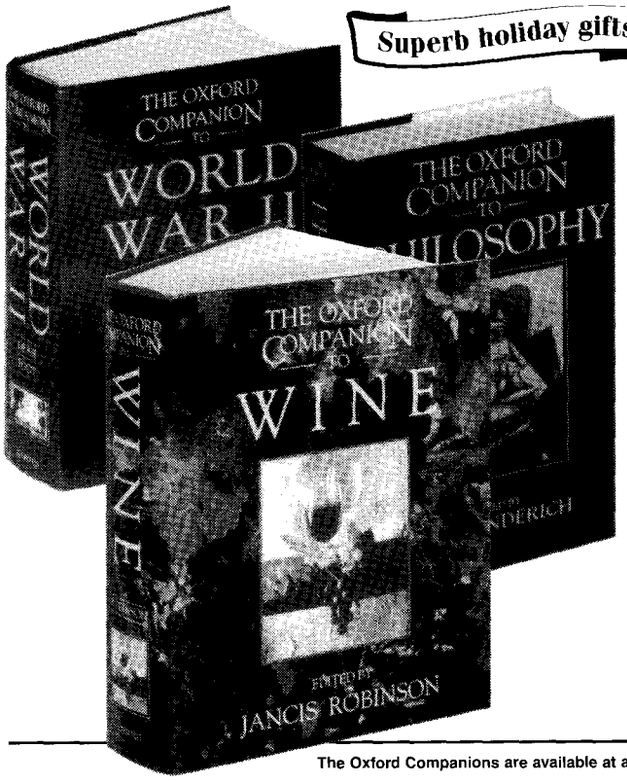
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said, "has a vision of the final agreement, but he doesn't share it with anyone." Goren added, "He's negotiating with a former enemy, not with the Israeli public."

Rarely does a spokesperson so perfectly articulate a politician's sensibility. Rabin's greatest flaw was not seeing that an elected leader must negotiate with his own people. Formed by his military career, he expected the citizenry to follow him as soldiers would their commander. And, as an archetypical product of the Labor Zionist movement, he showed that movement's arrogance toward other political groups.

Rabin's attitude cost him centrist support, and riled up the right. Nonetheless, better public relations wouldn't have changed the facts: Rabin was surrendering Jewish rule over parts of the land of Israel to what the right saw as an immutable enemy.

For the religious hardcore of the settlers, Rabin's derision brought home the sudden change in their status. When the right had been in power, they'd seen themselves as the Zionist vanguard. Now the prime minister treated them as irrelevant—one more reason, perhaps, for their despair and desperation.

Today the right is in shambles. Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu failed in recent months to separate himself from the far right and is now paying a political price. A poll during the week of mourning showed that were elections held now Shimon Peres would get 54 percent of the vote, Netanyahu 23 percent. The executive director of the Likud's Tel Aviv branch ran a black-framed newspaper ad, obituary style; under the words "Yitzhak Rabin, Excuse Us!" he apologized for the party's failure to stop incitement and called on Netanyahu to "draw conclusions." If Netanyahu remains head of the Likud, he'll have to distance himself from the far right—the bulk of the protesters he'd managed to bring out against the government.

At a convocation for Orthodox Zionist soul-searchers four days after the murder, leaders of the religious right devoted their energy to rejecting leftist criticism. "We've gathered not because we're guilty but because of our sensitivity and moral character," said the National Religious Party's Zevulun Hammer, who referred to the killer as a "weed in the garden." The thin veneer of composure crumbled, however, when Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, long a dissident in the settler camp, rose to the microphone and, roaring and weeping like a biblical prophet, accused unnamed rabbis of having ruled Rabin worthy of death. A key question in the coming weeks will be whether Orthodox settler organizations suffer serious defections, or whether their supporters convince themselves that the movement will survive the assassination.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX LEVAC

The irony is that Rabin's disdain for the public was not only a liability, but his greatest political asset. No one would ever have called him Slick Itzy. Because he appeared uninterested in winning favor, many Israelis trusted him—enough to bring Labor to power in 1992 and to get the peace process moving.

Peres is Rabin's opposite. The new prime minister is a consummate negotiator. In his first term as prime minister, in 1984-86, leading an unwieldy unity government, he defied gridlock to pull most Israeli forces out of Lebanon and administer shock therapy for hyperinflation. As Rabin's foreign minister, he kept the diplomatic process with the Palestinians going. His political style is to coopt opponents as much as possible, and he is expected to bring party rivals into his new government. But voters tend to think he will do anything to be liked. Labeled untrustworthy, he has failed, in election after election, to lead Labor to victory.

Next year, he plans to try again. By then, shock and post-assassination sympathy will have dissipated. No one knows yet if Peres will benefit from the halo of the martyr—or be measured against the Rabin myth and found wanting.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is the op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report.*

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A trip to Rangoon.

BURMESE DAZE

By Madeleine K. Albright

An extraordinary human and political drama is being played out in Burma. At center stage is the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), a hydra-headed military junta that has dominated the country since repressing a democratic uprising six years ago. Sharing the spotlight is the charismatic Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Prize-winning leader of the pro-democracy forces, daughter of the founder of modern Burma, Aung San. Observing intently, but almost silently, are Burma's educators, professionals and ordinary citizens, scarred by the past and wary about promises of a better future.

The unresolved question is whether the SLORC will release the stranglehold it has imposed on Burmese political life and allow real freedom. In September, I became the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Burma since the junta took power. I went to remind the SLORC that a fundamental change in its relationship with the United States will occur only when there is a fundamental change in its relationship with the Burmese people. I also went to express American solidarity with Aung San Suu Kyi.

Shortly after my arrival in Rangoon on September 8, in a huge room adorned with tulips, teapots and elephant tusks, I sat down with Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt. He is the chief of SLORC intelligence and the government's interlocutor of choice with Western officials. The general began our discussion with a verbal jog through his country's unsettled past. He argued that outsiders (like myself) cannot appreciate the three factors that set Burma apart from its democratic neighbors: its Buddhist culture; its ethnic diversity; and the special role the military has played over the forty-seven years since the country gained its independence. He claimed that the military had saved the country from chaos on three occasions, in 1958, 1962 and 1988, the last time by rescuing Burma from a fate worse than Bosnia's by imposing peace upon anarchic, Communist-inspired mobs.

Ignoring for the moment this distortion of history, I informed the general that the purpose of my visit was to talk about the future, not the past. Whatever the perceived justification for its earlier actions, the SLORC now faces an historic choice between the status quo and a democratic transition. The general insisted that the SLORC's approach is the best way to guarantee stability and that the Burmese people support its efforts to rebuild the economy and ensure law and order. "Even at midnight," he said, "you can walk around town without danger; that is why the Burmese people have such happy faces." I replied that during a lifetime of studying repressive regimes I had found the smiling quotient in many of them to have been quite high. Authoritarian leaders often delude themselves that they are loved, but the smiles they see are usually prompted not by affection, but fear.

The next morning, I met Aung San Suu Kyi for breakfast at her lakeside home. This is the place to which she had returned from England in 1988 to care for her dying mother; where she had soon thereafter written her first political speeches; and where—until her release this past July—she had spent almost six years under house arrest. In our discussion, Aung San Suu Kyi called for a dialogue between the pro-democracy forces and the SLORC. Asked when that dialogue should start, she referred to an old SLORC slogan: "Precisely, Correctly, Quickly."

I was struck, during our conversation, by her seeming contradictions. Outwardly fragile, she is clearly very strong; outwardly serene, her reserves of patience have worn thin; obviously determined, she avoids confrontation and seeks reconciliation. In the room where we had breakfast, there hangs an immense photograph of Aung San. Other photos show him surrounded by his family, including a 2-year-old girl with deep piercing eyes. Aung San was assassinated in 1947 at the age of 32, but today it is Aung San Suu Kyi, and not the SLORC, who represents Burmese national identity and pride. In the last thirty years, only she and the movement she leads have received a mandate from Burma's people.

For years, controversy has surrounded programs conducted within Burma by United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and the U.N. Development Program. Their efforts raise a classic policy dilemma: how to help people living under despotism without helping the despots themselves. In Burma, most U.N. agencies walked the line by funneling their assistance directly to people in need. I visited UNICEF projects that clearly meet this criterion: a school, a health center and a potable water project. Nevertheless, local U.N. officials admitted the difficulty of carrying out effective development work in the face of government efforts to turn that work to its own advantage.

What, then, is Burma's future? How will the drama play out? How, for example, will the SLORC respond to Aung San Suu Kyi's recent visit to a dissident monk; to her hosting a student political event over SLORC objections; and to her party's decision to reappoint her general-secretary in apparent contravention of a SLORC decree?

If donor countries deny the SLORC international respectability and development assistance, its leadership is more likely to acquiesce in this gradual enlargement of political space. Unlike kleptocracies elsewhere, the SLORC genuinely views itself as the guardian of Burma's economic future, however contemptuous it remains of political freedom. Over time, it may have to admit the con-

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nection between economic growth and political reform.

The United States should expedite this realization. Poverty in Burma is endemic, development spotty, the foreign debt is $5.5 billion. Most farming, road repair and construction is done with equipment many years out of date. Western capital has helped other Southeast Asian economies to expand. And so it is no wonder that SLORC seeks foreign investment and international loans. But the U.S. has stopped its economic assistance program and urged others to do the same.

Next year, the SLORC will launch a massive tourism campaign. It will offer the world breathtaking scenery, visits to fabled Mandalay, beautiful Buddhist temples, ancient palaces, picturesque lakes and unique handcrafts. But the roads and sights they are invited to see will have been refurbished through the sweat and toil of forced labor. Democracies should be ashamed to encourage their businesspeople to be "first in Burma," for this would provide the SLORC with the booty it needs to resist mounting pressure for a political opening. "Constructive engagement" must be, in fact, "constructive." International banks must not bail the SLORC out. And economic sanctions—especially in strategic industries—should neither be discarded nor triggered rashly, but rather kept in reserve.

The world should have faith, like Aung San Suu Kyi, in the strength of the democratic forces of Burma. Despite their poverty, the Burmese are a sophisticated, highly literate people, who have learned from bitter experience that justice, law and political rights are essential to national development. In an ethnically diverse country, a strong sense of national pride has survived. According to the cliché, dictators ride on tigers' backs; either they stay on top or they are eaten. But recent experience belies this. Peaceful transitions to democracy have occurred on five continents. If the SLORC sincerely wants to build a multiparty democracy, it should go ahead. This can be done, in the SLORC's favorite phrase, "systematically"; but it should begin soon and must not take forever. After all, South Africa—with problems at least as intractable—went from apartheid to Nelson Mandela's inauguration in less than five years.

Vaclav Havel, who endorsed Aung San Suu Kyi for the Nobel Peace Prize, has told me many times how important it was for those struggling to bring freedom to Eastern Europe to know that they had friends and supporters around the globe. It is essential now that democratic forces abroad maintain solidarity with those pursuing change in Burma. The SLORC has a choice—one road leads to isolation and ultimately to disaster; the other to respect and participation in the region's economic miracle. Half measures or phony measures (such as the SLORC-orchestrated National Convention) are not enough. The SLORC must choose. If it does, the United States will help and so will others. And Burma may become a model of the successful transition from tyranny to democracy, for its neighbors and for the world.

MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT is U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

EASTERN SLAVONIA POSTCARD

ROCKY-ROAD WARRIOR

By Anna Husarska

I had wanted to go to Sanski Most or to Banja Luka in Serb-occupied Bosnia to report on the Serb refugees there, but Sonja Karadžić (the daughter of Radovan) decides which foreign journalists enter the self-styled Republika Srpska, and she had not seen fit to let me in. To cheer me up, Dejan, a friend from Belgrade, proposed we spend a day with the man called Arkan, who was celebrating the fifth anniversary of his Volunteer Guard. Arkan, a 43-year-old baby-faced thug born Željko Ražnatović, is the ethnic cleanser par excellence. He and his paramilitaries have popped up at the scene of many a slaughter—from Vukovar in 1991 (the massacre which produced the Hague Court's three recent indictments) to Srebrenica in July. The proposal sounded a bit like "Picnic with S.S. Sturmbaufuhrer." But it had two advantages.

Advantage one: it was timely. That same morning the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, announced that Serb forces had brutally expelled about 3,500 Muslim refugees from northern Bosnia. The refugees told UNHCR that about 100 Bosnians were killed by Serbs under Arkan's paramilitary command. "In places where the local Serb population was initially fairly friendly, once Arkan's thugs arrived the situation changed, and they were intimidated into ostracizing the Muslims and behaving toward them with hostility," said the UNHCR spokesman. Advantage two: if we journalists tied Arkan up for a whole day, that was one day he wouldn't be killing Bosnians in Sanski Most.

The location for this celebration was also of interest. Erdut, where Arkan has his training center, is in Eastern Slavonia, the Serb-occupied portion of Croatia bordering Serbia proper. Here lies Vukovar, the Danube tourist town that the Serbs reduced to rubble in 1991. A new peace plan signed on November 12 would reincorporate Eastern Slavonia into Croatia after a minimum one-year transition period under U.N. protection.

We met up at the Belgrade headquarters of Arkan's Party of Serbian Unity—situated next to the Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) stadium, probably because Arkan is president of the soccer team's fan club. The building looks like a cross between a temple and a glass-covered swimming pool and, besides the party offices, contains an ice cream and pastry shop belonging to Arkan. (After the slaughter of Vukovar, Arkan reputedly said: "The war will stop when we reach Zagreb. I will open a branch of my ice cream parlor on Ban Jelacić Square.")

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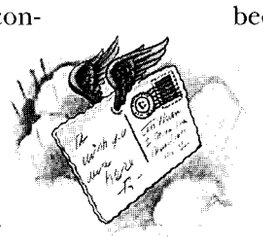
All around this strange hybrid building men roamed in military fatigues and baseball caps in camouflage colors, along with civilians in silk double-breasted vests, ample trousers and white socks (supporters of Arkan's volunteers) and subdued old men and young women in black (the families of dead volunteers).

Stacked up in the bus that was to transport us to Erdut were copies of Arkan's magazine, *Serb Unity*, a nationalistic variation on *Soldier of Fortune* devoted almost exclusively to the glorification of The Commander. On one cover, a young girl posed on a carpet in front of a Rolls-Royce, a champagne glass in hand. A pinup? No, this was the 22-year-old folk singer Ceca, whom Arkan married last February. ("Beauty and the Beast," foreign journalists dubbed the couple.)

The groom, whose smooth, clean-shaven face smiles from posters all around Belgrade, was convicted of bank robbery in Sweden in the 1970s—he escaped from prison in a shoot-out—and is wanted by Interpol for questioning in connection with a string of armed heists and assaults across Western Europe. Arkan also found time to work for the communist secret police. More recently, he is said to have made money on contraband fuel and weapons. Of course, most Serbs know that Arkan is a ruthless warlord and a jail-breaking gangster, but this seems only to add to his glory. As for Slobodan Milošević, he may not be as much of a nationalist as Arkan, but the opportunist in him sees that letting paramilitary thugs do the dirty jobs leaves his hands clean enough to shake with Western diplomats.



Our convoy consisted of three buses, a few black Western cars with smoked glass, some local Yugo cars, and a gray van that had U.S. Embassy plates until the embassy organized an auction this summer, and, to its embarrassment, Arkan came and bought the whole lot. We sped through toll booths with merely a wave and, more importantly, got only friendly salutes from the usually quite unfriendly gunmen at a dozen checkpoints.

The road took us through Vukovar, where the rubble has been cleared, but only about a tenth of the houses or apartments are inhabited. The freestanding suburban houses lie in ruins, their lawns and vegetable plots overgrown with weeds. Fresh sandbags festoon the roadblocks, and Vukovar's few signs and advertisements are now all in Cyrillic.

From Vukovar we followed the Danube, and a little outside Erdut, just before arriving at the bridge formerly known as "Brotherhood and Unity," we turned toward what was once a riverfront restaurant and is now the canteen for the Serb Volunteer Guard's training camp. The Guard is heavily guarded (dogs, men with machine guns and black masks); and its members wear two macho patches on their sleeves—a white Serb eagle on the right and a Tiger (they are called Arkan's Tigers) on the left.

In the field next to the restaurant some 200 uniformed men stood at attention in front of a podium laden with flowers, Tiger stickers, Arkan posters and five Orthodox priests. The ceremony began with rump-Yugoslavia's anthem. A tall lame man in uniform reviewed the troops, then came Boro Pelević, the Tigers' spokesman: The Commander was not with us because he was assuring the defense of Sanski Most.

I later spoke with two of the young women in black, the wife and sister of a man killed defending Sanski Most. Sasha Marinković, a truck driver from Novi Sad, joined the Guard four years ago "because he liked the action and the discipline," his sister said. He left two daughters—11-year-old Marina and 7-year-old Elena—along with his wife, 29-year-old Vesna. I asked his sister, Sofia, to tell me all these details because I thought I should feel sorry for Sasha's family. And I did. But I felt awkward, too, because I knew that if Sasha were not the kind of man eager to loot, rape and murder on command, he would not have stayed for four years in Arkan's Guard.

Back at the podium, Pelević was exhorting the crowd. "Are we going to allow Sanski Most to fall?" he shouted. "No, because Arkan's boys are defending it. And we will not allow Eastern Slavonia to fall [into Croat hands] because if it falls, then why did we fight for four years?" Why indeed, since the U.N.-brokered agreement stipulates that the land will be returned to Croatia.

After the military came the ceremony's religious portion: one of the five priests prayed for the success of Arkan's boys in the field. The prayers dragging on a bit, I wandered away and, to my surprise, came across a Yugoslav police car with a huge Arkan's Tigers sticker on the door. (Number plate: M602315, for the Hague's record.) The field kitchen vehicle had Yugoslav *army* number plates, the letters VJ clearly visible. So much for Milošević's denial of any official links with Arkan.

Arkan's Tigers desperately want to look like Real Men. Some wear white gloves and blue scarves plus black pilot-style overalls; others sport red berets or helmets and special camouflage overalls, with two zippers running from the neck to the ankles, "so," as one Real Man explained, "we don't have to cut our uniform when we get wounded." But don't regular soldiers also get wounded? I asked one of them. "No, not like us."

Because I was away from the stand, I missed the beginning of a performance by Mr. Milutin Kostić, a Belgrade actor. At one point, Kostić seemed to reach a fever pitch as he issued some kind of warning. The priests reacted calmly, but the uniformed men were visibly excited and our minder, a plainclothes Tiger, was beaming. "There you go," I thought to myself, "monsters that they are, they are still moved by an artist." Later, Dejan explained what the actor had said: he had promised those who attempt to grab Serb land a mouthful of huge, swollen, bumpy prick. The noun was repeated three times, the adjectives twice.

And then all the guests were offered a "modest soldier's meal" of beans and bacon. We were driven back to Belgrade, and that's where I heard the news: Sanski Most had fallen. •

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THE CONTRACT WITH K STREET

By John B. Judis

When 367 Republican House candidates signed the Contract with America on September 27, 1994, they pledged to create "a Congress that is doing what the American people want and doing it in a way that instills trust." As they stood on the steps of the Capitol, Texas Representative Dick Armey declared, "[W]e enter a new era in American government. Today one political party is listening to the concerns of the American people, and we are responding with specific legislation. We are united here today, over 150 current members of the House and over 200 candidates, united in the belief that the people's House must be wrested from the grip of special interests and handed back to you, the American people."

Few voters in November 1994 knew what was actually in the Contract, but they sensed a commitment to genuine reform. They were wrong. The new Republican House, like the old Democratic one, has followed the dictates of Washington lobbyists and campaign contributors. The companies represented are different—timber, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals and mid-size insurance rather than construction, entertainment and trial lawyers—but the result is just as bad, if not worse. Every major initiative—from tax cuts to Medicare reform—has borne the fingerprints of the special interests whose grip the Republicans had promised to loosen.

Take a few examples. Legislation reducing corporate liabilities for toxic waste was drafted by lobbyists from the American Petroleum Institute. Oil and gas PACs gave $3.9 million to Republicans in 1994 and $1.23 million in the first six months of this year. The Golden Rule Insurance Co. (with $1.4 million given to Republicans over the last four years and more to the Republican National Committee and Newt Gingrich's GOPAC than any other business) wangled a provision in the House Medicare reform bill that allows senior citizens to buy its special insurance programs. The provision will cost the Medicare fund an estimated $2.3 billion over seven years. Another provision in the tax bill, granting tax deductions to owners of these insurance programs, will cost the Treasury $1.3 billion.

Securities firms won radical reductions in capital gains taxes, drug companies won special tax credits for research and development, the Air Transport Association blocked implementation of a fuel tax on airplanes, Archer Daniels Midland and other ethanol producers retained a special tax credit. These firms are all major Republican donors. This year, for instance, Merrill Lynch contributed $500,000 to a GOP-organized coalition to promote the tax bill.

The American Bankers Association, which contributed $680,000 to Republican candidates in last year's election, got the House to eliminate the direct student loan program, which allowed students to borrow from the government rather than securing government-guaranteed loans through banks. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the direct loan program would have saved the government $4.3 billion over five years from reduced overhead and students $2 billion in charges.

What unites all of these "reforms" is that they have nothing to do with the mandate that Republicans claimed after their November 1994 victory. They don't make government cheaper or more efficient. They don't put money back in the pockets of average Americans. They are exactly the kind of measures that have deepened Americans' distrust of politics and Washington. They represent confirmation of a trend that disaffected voters have already sensed: the triumph of a political system oblivious to ordinary Americans and attuned to Beltway lobbyists, whether of the left or the right.

What House Republicans have done is to take a process of political decline that began three decades ago under the Democrats and accelerate it. The older system, which prevailed after World War II, was far from perfect, but it contained mechanisms by which Congress could, in Armey's words, "listen to the concerns of the American people." These involved interest groups, but the groups had a far different relationship to citizens outside of Washington and to each other, and they represented a much broader range of Americans. The election of 1994 did not revive this older system but furthered the hold of a new one dominated by Washington insiders.

How did this older democratic system work, and what is the system that is replacing it? Of course, America has never been a pure democracy. The country's size and economic diversity have always prevented anything like a system of direct representation. What legislators and

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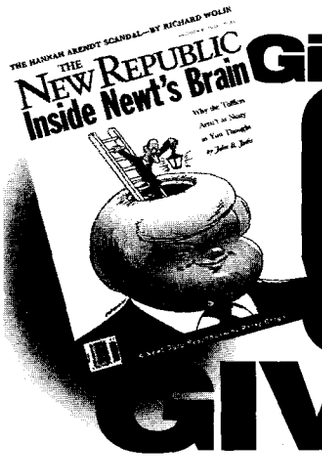

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executives finally do has always been shaped not only by their individual wills, but also by what Tocqueville discovered when he visited the United States in 1831: a welter of civil and political associations.

Even in Tocqueville's time, American politics took the form of an imperfect system of group influence in which the wishes of voters were represented through participation in churches, businesses, workmen's organizations, protest groups and political parties. Tocqueville extolled these associations as the secret to U.S. democracy, but they were a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for a fully functioning democracy. At its worst, during the post-Civil War Grant administration, this system of group influence meant corrupt rule by "the interests." At its best, during the decades after the Second World War, it meant the democratic pluralism celebrated by Robert Dahl and V.O. Key. What has distinguished the best of pluralism from the worst is the presence not only of large, representative interests groups, but also of a political establishment and a shared framework of political belief.

It is hard to remember now what counted as an interest group forty years ago. Instead of hundreds or even thousands of groups, there were only a handful that mattered. The AFL-CIO, formed in 1955, represented a third of American workers and a majority of private-sector blue-collar workers. Businesses were represented by organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the American Farm Bureau and the National Association of Manufacturers and by a few trade or professional groups like the American Medical Association. The NAACP represented black Americans. The National Council of Churches and the National Catholic Welfare Conference represented many Protestants and Catholics. Political parties worked through state organizations and through urban political organizations like Chicago's Daley Machine. The Democratic Party, the premier political party of the era, managed to unite Machine Democrats (and the white ethnics they represented), Southern Bourbons, Texas oilmen, Wall Street liberals and labor unions. The party's very looseness, and its independence from a formal governmental role, was its strength.

Many of these organizations and associations had offices in Washington and exercised their influence through lobbyists, but they were also directly linked to their members outside Washington. In the 1950s, workers did not view union leaders and the leadership of the new AFL-CIO as distant bureaucrats more interested in Washington salon life than in the welfare of their locals. The main business and consumer groups had active chapters around the country and raised their money through membership dues rather than direct mail. They were representative institutions rather than what we have come to call "inside the Beltway" groups.

Many of these groups and associations, such as the AFL-CIO and the National Association of Manufacturers, had conflicting interests on a range of issues, but they were united through a political establishment, which occupied the gray area between the political associations and governmental power. This establishment, which included leaders from business, finance, the media, labor, universities and the churches, worked through organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations and the Committee for Economic Development, think tanks like the Brookings Institution, foundations like Ford and Rockefeller and commissions set up by Congress or the president to address such problems as the solvency of the Social Security system or the missile gap with the Soviet Union.

Largely through the efforts of this postwar establishment, Americans came to support the Marshall Plan, the liberalization of trade and a neo-Keynesian fiscal strategy. Establishment organizations were also critical in winning national acceptance of the early civil rights movement. They served as orchestral conductors that transformed the cacophony of interests and associations into acceptable initiatives on behalf of the national interest.

To do their job, however, the establishment conductors needed a score—a shared conception of the national interest. In the postwar period, the conception was a synthesis of cold war mission and domestic egalitarianism—"cold war liberalism." It was a broad kind of liberalism rooted in the New Deal's concept of social security and collective bargaining and in Henry Luce's vision of an American Century. It stretched from Arthur Schlesinger to Dwight Eisenhower. While it excluded left-wing Communists and right-wing anti-Semites, racists and isolationists, it included most Democratic and Republican leaders.

This postwar pluralism came under attack in 1956 from C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite*. Mills charged that behind the appearance of plurality lay a unified and unaccountable elite. He had a point. Establishment groups were dominated by upper-class Americans with Roman numerals after their names. But the policy elite also included civil rights leaders like the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and labor officials like the United Auto Workers' Walter Reuther and was closely linked to more popular civic and political associations.

Most of the major legislative and executive decisions from 1945 through the 1960s reflected the influence of popular as well as elite organizations. It would be impossible, for instance, to explain the passage of Medicare in 1965 or the great civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965 as the result simply of upper-class manipulation. And lesser measures—from minimum-wage increases and public works bills to John Kennedy's trade and tax bills—were marked by accommodation between business, on the one hand, and labor organizations, small business groups and urban machines on the other.

While most Americans did not participate actively in the pluralist system of group pressure, they felt represented within it and did not exhibit the kind of systemic disaffection so common today. From 1948, when Henry Wallace challenged Truman with the help of the pro-

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Communist left, to 1968, when segregationist George Wallace ran as an independent, there were no significant third-party challenges. Mills derisively called the '50s "the great American celebration." In retrospect, he was probably right.

Some groups—like Southern blacks—were formally excluded, and others—like the women who read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*—felt increasingly unrepresented in the mass organizations of the older pluralism. But in the 1960s both groups appeared to be finding a place within the system—blacks through Martin Luther King's movement and women through NOW, which Friedan founded in 1966 as a mass organization closely linked to the labor movement.

In the tumult of the late 1960s, the pluralist system began to break down. The Vietnam War, the struggle for civil rights and the loss of American economic supremacy had a corrosive effect on the cold war liberal consensus and on the establishment organizations that sustained it. The elites divided sharply over Vietnam, and the foreign policy establishment split irrevocably. America's loss of economic supremacy had an even more subversive effect, casting doubt upon the country's ability to carry out the mission of the American Century. Gone was the optimism that underlaid American consensus. And gone also was the easy truce in industry, as American business, suddenly engaged in a fierce struggle for markets, spurned cooperation with labor and fought the expansion of the welfare state.

Outside the South, most Americans supported the first phase in the civil rights movement that climaxed in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But as advocates of black power gained ascendancy, and as the civil rights agenda shifted from equal access and political rights to affirmative action, many white Americans saw blacks as seeking a kind of privileged entry into society that neither they nor their parents had enjoyed. The debate over busing, quotas and affirmative action obscured the promise of economic and social equality that lay at the heart of cold war liberalism. Equality increasingly came to be identified with racial equality.

The elites split accordingly. Foundations like Ford, which had first courted controversy by funding black community control of education in New York's Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhoods, found themselves challenged by conservative foundations like Bradley and Olin. Think tanks like Brookings found themselves challenged by new institutes like Heritage and American Enterprise. The AFL-CIO leadership—previously welcomed into higher circles—was snubbed by new organizations like the Business Roundtable. Just as there was no longer any agreement about America's mission in the world, there was no agreement about its mission at home either.

During these same decades, the civic and political associations that had sustained the older pluralism suffered heavy damage. The Democratic Party fractured over foreign policy and race. The labor movement collapsed, declining by the 1990s to less than 15 percent of American workers and only 11 percent of those in the private sector. Other organizations that represented the working classes and poor fared no better. King's movement fell apart, and the NAACP was crippled by scandal. Community organizing, which thrived in the '70s, atrophied and never produced, as some of its proponents hoped, a national movement that could complement the labor movement. In effect, the working classes and the poor lost much of their effective representation in national politics.

At the same time as the old postwar pluralism was crumbling, a new system, based on Washington's K Street, was emerging. At its heart were business lobbyists and lobbies—spurred by new regulations and trade conflicts. From 1961 to 1982, the number of corporate headquarters in Washington increased tenfold. The number of lobbyists and lawyers in Washington tripled between 1973 and 1983. In the 1970s, the American Petroleum Institute alone employed more lobbyists than the AFL-CIO. In the '80s, foreign business money from Japan and other trade rivals poured into Washington's K Street. In 1989 alone, the Japanese spent $150 million on Washington lobbyists. By the '90s, businesses employed about 10,000 lobbyists in Washington.

Decades earlier, business leaders like Robert McNamara or Paul Hoffman had aspired to be national leaders—to speak for the entire nation and not simply their own firm or industry. But the new business lobbyists and organizations served narrow policy agendas. Former high officials thought nothing of representing foreign companies that were out to win market share from embattled American firms or lobbying for outlaw countries like Libya. The single-minded quest for profit also transformed the function of the nonpartisan think

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tank. Businesses began using economic research to rationalize purely self-interested policies. They threw money into the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and into pseudo-research organizations like the Council for Capital Formation. While the older institutions like Brookings had attempted to remain above the factional fray, the new think tanks boasted about their connections with Republicans.

Business also sought to strengthen its influence through campaign spending. According to calculations by the Center for Responsive Politics, 80 percent of the contributions to national candidates in the 1992 elections came from industry, whether through political action committees or individual contributions. In 1994, 69 percent of total PAC contributions and 89 percent of Republican PAC contributions came from business groups.

Some business spending canceled itself out. Since businesses often lobby against each other—AT&T, for instance, against the Baby Bells—business contributions didn't necessarily guarantee a clear outcome and have even provided an opportunity for other organizations to hold the balance of power. But corporate lobbying and campaign contributions have guaranteed that, on issues that clearly divide business from consumers or labor, business would prevail. That first became apparent in the Carter administration when the AFL-CIO lost on labor law reform, consumer groups lost on their plan for an Office of Consumer Representation, and business succeeded in transforming Carter's progressive tax reform plan into a capital gains tax cut for business and the wealthy.

But business wasn't the only new player in national politics. The social and political movements that began in the late '60s spawned new groups and the expansion of old ones just as the older pluralism was splintering. These included environmental organizations like the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund; women's, gay rights and abortion rights organizations; groups favoring gun control; free speech lobbies like People for the American Way; good-government organizations like Common Cause; and constituent lobbies like the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The rise of these groups helped inspire a backlash. Beginning in the late '70s, socially conservative groups like the Christian Voice, the Conservative Caucus, Concerned Women for America and the Eagle Forum also gained clout and numbers. Altogether, the liberal and conservative social-interest groups field about 3,000 lobbyists in Washington.

Many of these new groups looked on the surface like mass organizations. AARP, for instance, boasts more than 30 million members, a legislative staff of 120 and seventeen registered lobbyists. But, with the exception of those few organizations like NOW that were rooted in the older pluralism, these new groups have a much more tenuous relationship to the public than the groups that dominated the politics of the 1950s. They don't have active memberships; and they're driven by their staffs, many of whom are self-appointed or control the boards of directors that appoint them. Membership is merely one means of raising money through direct mail. Members may get certain services in exchange for their contribution, but they are not necessarily entitled to a say in the future of the organization.

These (mostly liberal) interest groups are also dominated by the affluent. According to a 1990 survey, the typical donor was a professional or manager with an income between $50,000 and $100,000, which meant the top 21 percent of Americans. Most of the wage-earning classes don't give to these organizations and don't feel represented by them. (That's true as well of many conservative lobbies. Christian right organizations have a decidedly upper-middle-class membership and, unlike older church groups, don't see their role as being tribunes for the poor.) Even those liberal groups that claim to champion the interests of working people and the poor don't have a membership base among them. Ralph Nader's public interest groups primarily attract college students and recent graduates. And the Children's Defense Fund—unlike the old National Welfare Rights Organization—has its base among social workers rather than their clients.

Together, the growth of these business and social-issue lobbies has created a phenomenal, and unprecedented, concentration of power in Washington. In 1994, for instance, residents of Washington gave more money to national candidates than residents of any other city, even though Washington itself only had a single uncontested congressional race. More PAC money emanated from Washington than from the rest of the country put together.

Until this year, the liberal issue groups have had far more money and members than the conservative ones—NARAL, for instance, spent more money in past elections than all the pro-life organizations put together. Of the top ten single-issue or ideological PACs in 1992, only one, the National Rifle Association, was clearly identified with the right. The rest included the feminist Emily's List and Women's Campaign Fund, the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters, NARAL and the Human Rights Campaign. That accounted for their success in repealing efforts by social conservatives to roll back *Roe* v. *Wade* or to gut environmental laws. From the mid-'70s through 1992, Washington was dominated by a de facto alliance between conservative business groups and liberal social-issue organizations. In some cases, the ties were formal. Business provided much of the funding for NOW's Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Children's Defense Fund and the National Wildlife Federation.

The power exercised by these two kinds of lobbies has created the great paradox in American politics: every president since Carter has gotten elected on the basis of populist-sounding economics (even Bush: remember "read my lips"?) and a moderate or even conservative approach to social issues (from Carter's "born-again" Christianity to Clinton's "new covenant"). But once in

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Reading and Ideology

The recent Fairfax County, Virginia, school board elections featured a battle between right-wing and liberal candidates. According to the *Washington Post*, at least 12 of the 35 candidates favored teaching creationism in the schools. Other hotly debated issues included "what to teach about homosexuality and how big a role phonics should play in reading instruction" (October 21, 1995). One commentator describing the election said, "What is at stake is the ability to educate our children in the values that both sides hold dear." Values? Wait a minute! What you want your children to learn about homosexuality is a matter of values. But should science be subject to an ideological test? Or methods for teaching reading?

Soviet agriculture went down the drain when ideology took over from science.

All of this sounds unpleasantly familiar. Once upon a time, in a country called the Soviet Union, the validity of science was decided on political grounds. Many Westerners still remember the story of a fellow named Lysenko. His theory of genetics was more consistent with Marxism than was Mendelianism, which was the scientific standard everywhere else in the world. So Lysenko and his genetics were elevated, and the others learned they had better shut up. We laughed at the Soviets for deciding science on the basis of ideology; yet we are making that mistake with education.

In the so-called Reading Wars, two groups are battling for control over how children learn to read. According to supporters of phonics, children must be taught to connect words that are part of their spoken vocabulary with the unfamiliar combinations of letters on the page, and they do this by learning how to "sound out" letters and letter combinations. Phonics supporters also say that youngsters need lots of practice in decoding—making the connection—until it becomes automatic. Phonics supporters are absolutely correct in these beliefs. But more extreme advocates of phonics—we might call them the phonics-only people—favor a dry and mechanistic approach to introducing children to the world of reading and writing.

Purist whole-language advocates, on the other hand, believe that reading is as natural as speaking. The best way to teach reading, they say, is to expose children to stories they will want to read, and let them figure out words from their context in the sentence or story, guessing if necessary. Sooner or later, they will get it right.

But as a group of articles in the Summer 1995 issue of *American Educator* makes clear, children learn best in a system that combines aspects of phonics *and* whole language. Researchers have exploded the whole-language contention that children learn to read as naturally as they learn to speak. (If they did, there wouldn't be any illiterate societies because there aren't any societies where people can't talk.) Some children learn without being given systematic, explicit instruction in sounding out words. Many do not—and that is where phonics comes in. However, researchers stress that, while knowing how to decode is essential, it is not enough. They agree with whole-language advocates that teachers must also expose their students to materials the youngsters are eager to read. Otherwise, youngsters may have little interest in reading, probably won't read much, and will never get enough practice to be skilled readers.

You'd think that most school districts would opt for the system good reading teachers have always used: a combination of phonics and whole language. That hasn't happened. Instead, the teaching of reading has become an ideological football. The left wing, with its romantic ideas about how children learn, has adopted whole language as the sole path. And for the past several years, it has been tremendously popular. The right wing, on the other hand, which believes that learning doesn't have to be fun and that children need to be shaped up by discipline, has seized on phonics. As a result, parents whose only interest is in making sure their children get a good start have become frustrated and infuriated because they see that, in order to get phonics instruction, they might be forced to vote for school board candidates who favor teaching creationism and gay bashing.

But there are signs that evidence is beginning to prevail over ideology. After seven years of whole language—and plummeting reading scores—California recently decided to reintroduce phonics into its reading program. That needs to happen all over the country—in phonics-only and whole-language-only districts. We have sound research on the subject of how children learn to read. It is up to the people in central offices and school boards to make policy decisions on the basis of this research. Soviet agriculture went down the drain when ideology took over from science. We ignore that lesson at our peril.

For a copy of the Summer 1995 issue of *American Educator*, write to "Teaching Reading," AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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office each of these administrations has inevitably fallen under the sway of Washington's business conservatives and social liberals. Even Reagan was forced to abandon the social agenda on which he was elected.

Perhaps the most glaring symbol of their real clout came with Clinton's victory in November 1992. Clinton won, of course, on the slogan "Putting People First," but his first two decisions were to remove the ban on gays in the military and to renege on his promise of a middle-class tax cut in order to concentrate on reducing the budget deficit. Both decisions reflected the influence of these lobbies. Not surprisingly, voters have felt cheated and deceived.

Americans' perception of this new system of power cannot be reduced to partisan terms. To some, it is the "liberal elite," but to many liberals or populists it is a "business elite." Both perceptions are valid depending on who is in office at the time. What Americans see is not simply certain outcomes they don't support, but a process of reaching these outcomes from which they feel alienated and estranged.

Gingrich and the House Republicans successfully appealed to this alienation. According to Ruy Teixeira of the Economic Policy Institute, the greatest shift toward the Republicans in 1994 occurred among lower-income voters who had not graduated from college—precisely the people left out of the new system of power. But once installed in their new suites, the Republican House leaders largely ignored their mandate: they merely changed a few of the components in this new system in Washington without changing the system at all. After successfully wooing the outsiders they quickly made a Faustian bargain with the insiders.

In the year leading up to the 1994 election, the House Republicans had courted three different kinds of groups. First, within the universe of Washington business interests, they appealed to those that opposed Clinton administration policies or feared action from a Democratic Congress. These included oil and gas interests, mining and timber, tobacco companies, pharmaceutical and medium-sized health insurance firms, commercial banks, securities firms that specialized in derivatives and hedge funds, airlines, defense contractors and the small, independent businesses represented by the National Federation of Independent Business.

Secondly, the Republicans sought support from social-interest groups that had been alienated by Clinton's support for abortion rights, homosexuals in the military and gun control. These included the National Rifle Association, the Christian Coalition and other groups identified with the religious right. Thirdly, the Republicans appealed to distinctly anti-Washington movements. These included Perot's United We Stand—with its support for lobbying and campaign finance reform—and the movements for term limits and property rights.

Once in power, the Republican House leaders moved to consolidate and broaden their business support. Gingrich and Bill Paxon, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, let it be known that lobbyists who continued to contribute to Democrats would not be welcome in Republican conclaves. To attract support, the House leaders organized coalitions to back specific legislation. They set up Project Relief to promote regulatory reform, a Coalition for Our Children's Future to back their budget plans, and a Coalition for America's Future to support their tax bill. These efforts were wildly successful. More than 350 business groups joined Representative Tom DeLay's Project Relief. According to Nancy Watzman of the Center for Responsive Politics, the business PACs associated with Project Relief contributed $5.36 million to Republicans during the first six months of 1995. By comparison, they gave $2.6 million to Republicans in the first six months of 1993.

In exchange for such largess, the House Republicans allowed the lobbyists to draft legislation. Project Relief member Gordon Gooch, a lobbyist for petrochemical companies, wrote the first draft of a House bill establishing a moratorium on new regulations. Peter Molinari, a lobbyist for Union Carbide, and Paul Smith, a lobbyist for UPS, revised Gooch's draft. (UPS's contribution was particularly egregious. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration gets more complaints from UPS workers than from any other company. But UPS, which contributed more to candidates in the last election than any other company, got the Republicans to prohibit OSHA from even researching the ergonomic injuries that many UPS workers suffer.) Similarly, large sections of a draft from the American Petroleum Institute made their way into a bill rewriting Superfund legislation sponsored by Ohio Representative Mike Oxley, the chairman of the House Commerce subcommittee on hazardous materials.

When the Democrats controlled Congress, they had solicited advice from business lobbyists, but the Democrats also had to listen to lobbyists from environmental groups, consumer organizations and the AFL-CIO. Democratic congressional staff attempted to craft bills that would appease or accommodate each of these interests while often favoring business. But during their first year House Republicans have listened only to business lobbyists. When Representative Bud Shuster, the chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, established a coalition to rewrite the Clean Water Act, he drew upon the Chemical Manufacturers Association and other business groups but specifically excluded even the tamest environmental and consumer groups.

The House Republicans have also allowed lobbyists free rein in House meetings. Lobbyists have been allowed to sit on the dais in the committee sessions—something that never happened under the Democrats. When Democratic members—and even reporters—have sought briefings on legislation, they have been referred to lobbyists. We haven't seen such a brazen connection between business lobbyists and Congress since Jay Cooke and the railroad interests roamed the

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Capitol after the Civil War.

The social-interest groups that backed the Republicans have also gotten a little of what they wanted. The Christian right didn't nail down school prayer, but it has won some anti-abortion legislation. The NRA got hearings on Waco to divert public attention after the Oklahoma City bombing spotlighted the NRA's incendiary rhetoric. And the property rights organizations have been cheered by "takings" legislation that is really designed to help out the timber industry. Meanwhile, the House Republicans have spurned those individuals and movements that favored political reform—that wanted to loosen the grip of the special interests. Term limits legislation, now a threat to Republican rule, was defeated in the House. Campaign finance reform has been repeatedly put off.

The Republicans, it's true, have supported a bill to change lobbying rules. Representative Ernest Istook's bill, which is backed by Gingrich and Armey, would drastically limit any political activity by nonprofit groups that take federal funds. But the bill, which conveniently overlooks businesses that receive federal contracts or tax subsidies, is meant to paralyze the AARP, the World Wildlife Fund and Planned Parenthood at the expense of their social and business rivals. Istook's bill captures the irony of the entire House Republican effort: it is not an attempt to reform lobbying but merely to strengthen one side of K Street against another.

The Senate does not represent an alternative. In the past, Senate Republicans have solicited advice from a broader collection of interest groups, but this year under Bob Dole the Senate has mimicked the House. For instance, Dole's Regulatory Reform Act, which would have placed numerous legal obstacles in the way of environmental enforcement, was drafted by business lobbyists C. Boyden Gray, Henry Nickel and Turner Smith Jr.

Can anything be done to correct this, apart from holding Gingrich et al. accountable? Most of the proposals to reform the current political system do not really address the deepest problems. It's not at all clear that imposing term limits on Congress will make legislators less susceptible to the influence of lobbyists. Term limits may make members of Congress more responsive to local interests; but they may also make them more dependent on K Street's expertise. Other reforms, including proportional representation, could change the composition of Congress without necessarily affecting how it makes decisions.

Lobbying and campaign finance reform could clearly help, but they are no panaceas. Both kinds of reform run up against the constitutional right of free speech. Lobbyists can be asked to disclose their activities but not to desist from them. Candidates can be financed publicly, but nothing prevents private interests from waging their own campaign on behalf of a candidate. If there were campaign reform, these kind of efforts would probably multiply.

Electing the candidate of your choice doesn't necessarily help, either. The choice between Clinton and Dole, for instance, like the choice between Clinton and Bush in 1992, is really between two different but intersecting sections of K Street. Nor are men on horseback like Perot and Powell the answer. What makes these kind of candidates attractive—their remove from the vortex of organized politics and parties—also makes them even less capable of achieving change than a Clinton or Dole.

The problem of American democracy cannot be solved entirely in Washington or in the electoral system. Even if Gingrich, DeLay and Armey wanted to reform Congress, they would have failed. As Tocqueville understood, the key to American democracy does not lie in its system of elections but in its independent civic and political associations and in the structure of belief that sustains and unites them. Short of a dramatic change in our political culture, changing who is in office or the rules for their election won't make a lot of difference.

Politics can't be reformed as long as there are no countervailing membership organizations that can represent the 79 percent of Americans who have not graduated from college and have no hope of working as software programmers or corporate middle managers. It's not a question of achieving different outcomes, but of more of America being represented in the process of decision-making. John Sweeney's accession to the leadership of the AFL-CIO may promise more for American democracy than Newt Gingrich becoming Speaker of the House. Or the AFL-CIO's decline may prove irreversible, in which case a different kind of movement and organizations will have to emerge—ones more suitable to the diversified workforce of post-industrial capitalism.

Politics also can't be reformed as long as a spirit of craven individualism consumes the nation's elite. Former high government officials like C. Boyden Gray III think nothing of selling their expertise to drug companies looking to impede the Food and Drug Administration. Think tanks like AEI think nothing of accepting grants from the Japanese Foreign Ministry to turn out ostensibly objective studies on U.S.-Japanese trade. The old cold war establishment certainly can't be revived, but a new establishment—dedicated to public service—will have to emerge over the decade. Otherwise, our politics will continue to be dominated by the culture of lobbyists.

And our pluralist system can't be reformed unless Americans recapture a sense of optimism about their country and its future. That isn't just the job of ministers, psychologists or political scientists. And it is not simply a matter of inculcating good feeling. Political theory arises out of movements for change within the society. It is based upon ordinary citizens banding together to achieve objectives that they cannot accomplish by themselves. A new framework for American politics—a worthy successor to cold war liberalism and the vision of the American Century—can only emerge through the attempt to achieve genuine reform. And that, ultimately, is up to us. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Odd Couple

Christopher Hampton is best known in this country for his dramatization, on stage and screen, of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, but he has been an eminent figure in the British theater for more than thirty years. For twenty of those years he has been interested in the story of Dora Carrington and Lytton Strachey and has been involved in several aborted attempts to film it. At last **Carrington** (Gramercy) arrives, and in a way we can all be glad that it was delayed because Hampton became empowered to direct it, and his two leading actors wouldn't have been available twenty years ago.

These days a certain ridiculous risk is involved in making a film set in Britain before World War One: rote cries of "Masterpiece Theater" rend the air on cue. In this case, the cries, already audible, are especially dumb: the Carrington-Strachey affair is deployed before us for its depth of character. It would be silly, even ungrateful, to deny the benefits bestowed by Caroline Amies, the production designer, and Penny Rose, the costume designer. (I confess that I wondered how they made Strachey's tweed hat crinkle in just the right way.) But the appurtenances of class and of conscious bohemianism are integral to the characters themselves, not imposed as decor. Settings and story are unified.

That story will be familiar to those who have read Michael Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey* or Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina's *Carrington*. Hampton's screenplay is derived from the former. Dora Carrington, who disliked her first name and never used it, was born in 1893 to a middle-class family, and, apparently sufficiently moneyed, devoted herself to a life of painting—amateur in the sense that she wasn't concerned with exhibiting and selling. Strachey, born in 1880, the son of a general, was educated at Cambridge, where he joined friends who later became what was called the Bloomsbury Group. Strachey, not very well off, wrote reviews mostly, without any strenuous ambition to get rich by writing. He and Carrington met in 1915 when he was well known in his circle as a homosexual, and Carrington was equally well known as a virgin. She soon changed her state, he never changed his, but the central fascination about them is that theirs is a love story.

Whether anything sexual ever happened between them, as may possibly have been the case, is not the point. They certainly had active sexual lives apart from each other. Yet they were mutually devoted, he in his designedly reticent yet airy way, constantly striving to translate experience into Wildean epigrams, she much more unguarded and frankly emotional, percipient and patient. Basically what is portrayed here is marital love without sex. Though each was active with other partners—Carrington even married someone else—their love was so strong that his death in 1932 became her own death sentence.

A cruel joke of fate, their situation? With Olympian detachment, we might say so; yet if Strachey had been heterosexual, he wouldn't have been the person he was, and it's the person he was that Carrington, knowing all about him early on, fell in love with and continued to love. Perhaps it wasn't a joke of fate, just a fate.

Still, it is that fate, settled early for both, that keeps this excellently executed film from being deeply moving. Once the pair fall in love, nothing fundamental changes for either. Each of them has multiple adventures: Strachey's biggest one is in becoming a best-selling author—first with *Eminent Victorians*—which disconcerts him a bit. The development in the film is in character, not in drama. That development has its rewards, of inflection and reflection, but they are not dramatic; and the finish of the story, for all its pathos, is relatively calm—a termination rather than a climax.

Paradoxically, none of this could be true if the two leading performances were not so fine, if these two characters were not worlds in themselves. Jonathan Pryce has already been garlanded for his Strachey with the Cannes Film Festival prize, and for a change that prize was something more than dim-witted obeisance to propaganda. Pryce, bearded and spindly, like a self-guided marionette, creates the anomaly of a physically weak man whose strength lies in flaunting that weakness. He has the advantage of speaking all the witty lines in the script; still, he himself creates a caustic charm.

Emma Thompson, who is Carrington, got no prize at Cannes, and my personal consolation is that no prize is good enough for her. Talk about the art that conceals art! Thompson never makes us feel that she is mastering a mood or responding tellingly or providing any

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Clockers. *Drug-dealing, murder, aspiration in Brooklyn, given a visual lift by Spike Lee's pyrotechnics. (Reviewed 10/2/95)* **Devil in a Blue Dress.** *Denzel Washington heads a mostly black cast in this crime thriller set in L.A. Best aspect: its view of Watts in 1948, seventeen years before the explosion. (10/30/95)* **Les Misérables.** *An enjoyable mess. Claude Lelouch's screenplay blends a modern Jean Valjean with Hugo's and with a film of Hugo—to no perceptible point, but it all looks great; and the cast headed by Jean-Paul Belmondo is splendid. (11/20/95)* **A Month by the Lake.** *Vanessa Redgrave. A mild little 1937 English romance set in Italy. But . . . Vanessa Redgrave. (10/23/95)* **—SK**

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other individuated touches. A soul, a spirit, a mind—this is not too strong—have been apprehended, and a body has been provided for them. By now we expect this of Thompson, from the spicy modern sex comedy of *The Tall Guy* through Shakespearean perfection in *Much Ado About Nothing* to the private-public, volatile yet well-bred Carrington. This film, for all its other brilliancies, would collapse without the central truth of her performance. Even Pryce's scintillation depends on her.

To which I must add mention of assistance she has had. The lighting of her face, in widely varied circumstances, by Denis Lenoir is marvelous. Lenoir doesn't prop up Thompson's acting the way cinematography must sometimes do, but he understands her face and what she needs. To which mention must be added the comfort of Michael Nyman's score, conceived in chamber music terms. I can't remember another film in which a string quartet accompanies sex scenes. Nyman's music bespeaks the world of these people.

Hampton directs with what can be called the courage of his convictions—about these characters. One archetypal instance is the first meeting of Carrington and Strachey. They are fellow-guests at a country house, and after they are introduced, they have nothing to say to each other. They're not much interested in each other. The camera holds them for, I'd guess, a full minute while they attempt to make comments, find few, and are both completely unembarrassed. After the film cuts to the next scene, we realize how tacitly funny that meeting scene was: we feel a tingle of anticipation that this picture is going to be handled intelligently. And it is.

Tangential Notes. Jonathan Pryce is also in **A Business Affair** (Castle Hill), a triangle comedy, supposedly mordant. He plays a London author whose wife is seduced by his publisher, and he is the only one of the three whose character becomes more than a pawn in a series of chessboard arrangements.

Christopher Hampton's early play about Verlaine and Rimbaud, now filmed, was a strained affair when it was performed here some years ago, and has not aged well. **Total Eclipse** (Fine Line) has a flavorful performance by David Thewlis as Verlaine, but he cannot overcome the absurd performance by Leonardo DiCaprio as Rimbaud, or Agnieszka Holland's ham-handed directing. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Tempest in a Smokepot

George C. Wolfe's dynamic production of **The Tempest**, which played last season in the Central Park and has now moved to the Broadhurst, proves once again that Joe Papp's latest successor is a brilliant showman. There is hardly a moment in this New York Shakespeare production that is not alive with dazzling and spectacular effects: Bunraku puppets, Indonesian shadow play, Caribbean carnivals, Macy's Day floats, Asian stilt-walkers, death masks, stick dancing, magical transformations effected through a haze of smokepots. Don't look to spend any quiet time here. The stage is in constant motion. This may be the busiest *Tempest* in history.

It has the advantage of a confident central performance by Patrick Stewart in the role of Prospero, the wronged Duke of Melon (this actor's way of pronouncing "Milan"). Best known to American audiences as Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Stewart comes to the part with considerable stage experience, particularly in England (perhaps this explains why his bio is seven times the length of any other actor's). Although Stewart is clearly better trained for Shakespeare than William Shatner or Leonard Nimoy, his star presence nevertheless tilts the production. It's hard to believe that this cool self-possessed Englishman could be father to Carrie Preston's hyperactive Miranda or brother to Nestor Serrano's hot-blooded Antonio. Stewart represents a calm island of RSC acting in a confused sea of American multiculturalism. Usually, two worlds are represented in *The Tempest*; here I counted at least eight.

Alas, none of them is very deeply probed. Aside from Serrano's Antonio, a darkly brooding misanthrope with considerable emotional resources, few of the other characters display an internal life. Even Stewart left me relatively unmoved, though he certainly enjoys moments of transcendence, particularly during his renunciation speech, spoken with great suffering at the pace of snails making love. I would guess that Wolfe lavished

WAR
LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE

The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare
Geoffrey Parker, Editor

A splendiferous account of war in the West, unique among works of its type because of its close integration of text and image and its strongly sounded and potentially controversial theme that war in Western societies is truly distinctive. The combined effort of seven leading experts, this book treats the history of all aspects of the subject, and places in context particular key elements in the history of armed engagement, from the Greek victory at Marathon, through the advent of gunpowder in medieval England and France, to the jungle warfare of Vietnam and the strategic air strikes of the Gulf War. Throughout there is an emphasis on the socio-economic aspects of military progress and how these help explain the rise over the past two millennia of the West to global military dominance.

Contributors include: Christopher Allmand, Bernard S. Bachrach, Victor Davis Hanson, John A. Lynn, Williamson A. Murray, Geoffrey Parker, and Patricia A. Seed.

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more time on devising theatrical effects than on deepening character or clarifying action. This is understandable, given his need to hold a distracted spectator's attention in big spaces like the noisy Delacorte and the cavernous Broadhurst. But I left the theater thinking that, rather than being a transplant, this *Tempest* truly belonged on Broadway, in company with such other stage spectaculars as *Phantom of the Opera* and *Sunset Boulevard.*

In the tradition of current historical revisionism, Wolfe has interpreted the play as a critique of European imperialism. Not only Caliban but also Ariel behave with overt hostility toward their slaveholding colonial master. Because these black islanders treat Prospero more like a malignant Simon Legree than a benign Robinson Crusoe, lines like "So, slave, hence!" and "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" ring with new racial meaning. Something is gained in this interpretation. Something is also lost. Played by Aunjanue Ellis in what looks like a decaying Balmain gown, Ariel always seems to be scowling and threatening other characters when she is not hopping, dancing and twirling as if auditioning for Merce Cunningham.

As for Caliban, Wolfe's casting and directing of Teagle F. Bougere in the role strikes me as a major miscalculation. His head shaven and painted red (he looks like he's wearing a colorful bathing cap), Bougere is a slender actor with a winning quality, given to broad smiles, worldly winks and graceful bows. He'd make a fine Puck. I'd even like to see him play Ariel. But a smiling, worldly, winning, graceful Caliban? In his effort to redeem the natives, Wolfe seriously underplays Caliban's brutal, lecherous quality. This "monster," after all, represents man in a state of nature (his very name is an anagram for "cannibal"). Wolfe also chooses to gloss over the fact that, rather than being allies, Caliban and Ariel fear and loathe each other, and that he almost raped Miranda.

And what a Miranda! Behaving as if she trained for the part by flipping between network sit-coms, Carrie Preston indulges in such goofy glandular mannerisms she manages to persuade us that the girl is not only ignorant but simpleminded. Preston is mismatched with Paul Whithorne's lyrical Ferdinand. Trinculo and Stefano are simply tiresome vaudevillians. And the courtiers, with the exception of Serrano and MacIntyre Dixon's gentle Gonzalo, seem to be as stranded in their characters as in the Bermoothes.

What I did admire were the elements of physical production: Riccardo Hernandez's setting—a circular ramp, miraculously covered with sand after the opening storm at sea; Paul Gallo's shafts of pinpoint lighting; the thunderous sound design of Dan Moses Schreier; Barbara Pollitt's mask and puppet designs; Hope Clarke's lively choreography; and the usually unendurable masque of Juno, Ceres and Iris (played on stilts). All of Wolfe's design collaborators, in fact, have united to provide a visual and aural feast. And the epilogue constitutes a breathtaking piece of stagecraft, as Prospero, with no art left to enchant, speaks his lines in front of a disappearing set, revealing a naked stage wall illuminated by bare stage lights. But because of Wolfe's emphasis on racial divisions, a play about forgiveness is not sufficiently allowed to enjoy its reconciliations. Near the end of the show, Antonio refuses Prospero's hand, and Caliban almost clubs him. Shakespeare's isle "is full of noises/ Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not." Wolfe's enchanted island is certainly full of delight. But, lacking sufficient human dimension, it offers not much depth or warmth. (N.B. It behooves me to mention that my own company is performing *The Tempest* this fall.)

I had the privilege this past weekend of witnessing a work with considerably greater humanity, though its hero is an android. **Mathew in the School of Life** (at The Kitchen) is the product of two stage wizards, John Moran (composer) and Bob McGrath (director), who work as a single-cell unit with a company called Ridge Theater. McGrath trained at Carnegie Mellon; Moran is a homespun product of Lincoln, Nebraska. Although both men are barely into their 30s, their collaboration may be potentially as important for American performing arts as that of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson. Moran actually happens to be a Glass protégé, though he seems equally influenced by the electronic experiments of Laurie Anderson (like her, he uses technology to indict technology). Moran composes on synthesizers and computers and calls his pieces "operas." But they are more like digital collages than musical compositions, mixing acoustic sound effects with recorded voices which are then lip-synched by the actors. As for McGrath, he serves as stage director, actors' coach, drill sergeant and visual magician on behalf of the most intricately technical presentation I have seen since Wilson's *Black Rider.*

Although *Mathew* is my first experience of their work, Moran and McGrath have already fashioned four previous pieces together, *Jack Benny!, The Death Train of Baron von Frankenstein, Every Day Newt Burman: The Trilogy of Cyclic-Existence* and *The Manson Family.* The other titles suggest how deeply these two men have been influenced by popular culture and yesterday's news—so does *Mathew.* Yet, like the best of modern artists, they use these images to inform a higher vision. *Mathew* is set on some future planet in outer space, totally mechanized and dehumanized—in short, a planet very much like our own. Featuring "an android built to absorb human suffering," it proceeds as a kind of nightmarish Christian allegory cum Passion Play. Proceeding over four days, from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday, and concluding with the death of the hero (the opera begins and ends with a woman in black mourning over a coffin), *Mathew* audaciously parallels the life and death of Jesus were he to return to life as an alien humanoid.

The progress of Mathew, a holographic unit in a fiberglass white armored suit that gives him the appearance of a medieval knight, takes him from lobotomized infancy to agonized adulthood through a process of enforced education. Everyone and everything contributes to his painful discovery of what it means to be human, especially a tutor named Justinius (the voice of Allen Ginsberg). What he learns is the message of the Gospels and of Ecclesiastes—and also of Strindberg's *Dream Play*—that humankind is pitiable. He learns how to cross a street—and gets hit by a car. He learns about clock time. He learns how to shop in a supermarket. And he learns to feel rage. Over and over again, Mathew witnesses the beating of a fleeing perpetrator, much like Rodney King. Over and over again, he is taught to "draw" and say "freeze." Finally, he is shot by the same forces that instructed him, his last question being "Is death as long as life?"

Mathew is played by three different actors (one of them Moran), which allows McGrath to use such cinematic conventions as jump cuts and closeups. He also employs actual filmed sequences and projections, scattered between scenes on two-dimensional cutout sets with three-dimensional elements. With the aid of an excellent design team—Laurie Olinder and Fred Tietz (sets), Elizabeth Evers (costumes) and Howard S. Thies (lights)—he has created an ever-changing physical environment which a large cast navigates with the efficiency of robots. You will find echoes in this work of George Lucas's *THX 1138,* Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner,* Steven Spielberg's *Star Wars,* Stanley Kubrick's *2001* and just about every other sci-fi film you've ever seen. But *Mathew* is, for all these influences, a completely original achievement. Although the second act seemed to me unfinished (it involves a pirate sequence the relevance of which escaped me), *Mathew* commanded my continuous respect as an electrifying and compassionate work of art. •

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The Visible And The Invisible

By Mark Strand

Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography by Gail Levin

(Knopf, 678 pp., $35)

Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné edited by Gail Levin

(W.W. Norton, 994 pp., $750)

Many have come to think of Edward Hopper as the representative American painter. They find in his work the directness and the soberness that they associate with "character" or with "strength," with something, at any rate, that smacks of self-sufficiency and "telling it like it is," or more precisely, like it was. They also see the solemn acknowledgement of a loneliness that has a distinctly American cast, a kind of national sadness which, since it binds us in mutual misery, gives solace. Though his paintings appear to "speak" to everybody, Hopper himself spoke to almost nobody.

Born in 1882 in Nyack, New York, he grew up in a middle-class household, did well in school and showed an early talent for drawing. By the time he was 12, Hopper was already six feet tall, and skinny and ungainly as well. Mocked by his peers, he retreated into himself, cultivating, with his parents' encouragement, his gift for drawing. After high school he commuted daily to New York City, where he studied commercial art at the New York School of Illustrating. After a year he enrolled in the New York School of Art, where among his classmates were Guy Pene du Bois, Rockwell Kent and George Bellows. He studied first with William Merritt Chase, a gifted portraitist, who stressed, among other things, spontaneity, elegance and bravura brushwork, whom Hopper rarely mentioned as an influence, and then with the charismatic Robert Henri, a young man when Hopper studied with him, and who, like Chase, was rarely recalled by Hopper but remained a lifelong idol for Hopper's wife, Jo.

Hopper did well, won prizes and was considered by peers and teachers alike to be extremely gifted. Between 1906 and 1910, he made three trips to Europe, and the work he did there—paintings such as *Le Bistro* (1909), *Le Parc de Saint-Cloud* (1907) and *Après-Midi de Juin* (1907)—are sketchier, more improvisational, lighter in tone, altogether airier than any of his mature work. As fine as some of his French paintings are, they have less to do with his mature work than the illustrations by which he earned his living, especially those for *System: The Magazine of Business*, in which people in offices sit at desks or stare out of windows.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

EDWARD HOPPER, *NEW YORK MOVIE*, 1939

Despite the sale of a painting (*Sailing*, 1911) in the famous Armory Show in 1913, Hopper's career as a painter would not begin to flourish until the late 1920s. Before then he had been a moderately successful illustrator, an occupation he detested and for which he felt he had only a modest talent. During Hopper's period as an illustrator, his friend Guy Pene du Bois wrote the following in his diary in November, 1918:

> E. Hopper is a long lean friend of mine who began doing some illustrating a few years back and is still at it. I've been seeing quite a little of him lately. He is a voracious reader. Gone through all the modern French productions, read a lot of Russian, a lot of German. Loves able dissection of the human species. Hates romance? Timid as an English school boy himself. Long and lean—face great prominent masticating muscles, strong teeth, big mouth, full lipped but not sensuous.
>
> Cool about his painting. Blocks out things. Hardly any freedom in handling. Carries out his plan. Thinks of spacing. Takes little advantage of accident. Static pictures. Loves the romance of uniforms.
>
> The best man we had at school. A capable man still—but in the present condition not an artist. Not free enough for that.
>
> Too much Anglo-Saxon reserve. And he does not like it a bit. Loves the freedom of the Latins rather.
>
> Should be married. But can't imagine to what kind of woman. The hunger of that man.
>
> He always makes me feel like tripping sentences together recklessly. But he's far from dull though he makes me feel like a papier or a foolish butterfly—either or both. Such sincerity.
>
> But the hunger of him, the hunger of him! I'd like to see him out of his present condition. I'd like to see him happy.

This remains the most perceptive and affectionate statement about Hopper.

Hopper's first great success came as an etcher. It was a career that spanned only six years, from 1917 to 1923, and now seems like the ideal bridge between the illustrations that he had done and the paintings he would do. In the etchings, Hopper displayed the draughtsman's skills that he developed as an illustrator and a preference for the kind of subject matter he would later be famous for: isolated houses in the country, isolated figures in the city. In 1924, he was taken on by the Rehn Gallery in New York City, an association that would continue throughout his life. The success

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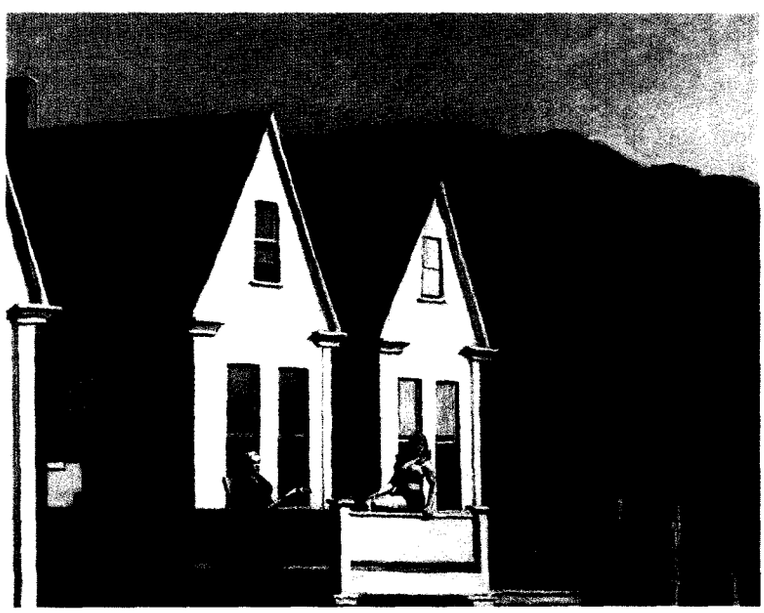
of his graphic work was followed by even greater success as a watercolorist. And his watercolors also pointed ahead to his major oils. Many of the watercolors of houses seem like studies for later paintings. Once Hopper's watercolors began to sell, he never went back to illustrating.

Hopper was almost 42 when he married Jo Nivison, who was a year younger than himself and had also been a student of Robert Henri. The difficulties of the marriage—it knew few triumphs other than its longevity—form the substance of Gail Levin's thick and engrossing biography, which relies heavily on Jo Hopper's diary. Levin's "intimate biography" of him, in fact, is more an intimate biography of her. He was not easy to live with. One feels acutely Jo's frustration with Hopper's silences, his long periods of self-absorption. The responses to shared events (sometimes appreciative, but more often complaining) are hers, never his. It is clear that much of what Jo wrote in her diary was written out of anger and frustration with Hopper's monumental aloofness. Since she had nowhere else to turn, she wrote copiously. And yet the cumulative, unexpected effect of all her complaints is to lend the silent, remote Hopper a certain dignity.

Levin's sympathies are clearly with Jo. Her noncareer as a painter is laid at Hopper's feet; he did nothing to help her gain recognition. He even sat on juries that rejected her work, though this in itself is a complicated test of a husband's loyalty. (Nothing about the few extant paintings by Jo Hopper seems remarkable.) Her unhappiness with Hopper's sexual demands are also seen by Levin as understandable; but what some see as "physical and psychological indignities" may be perceived by others as playfulness or needful love. At any rate, we have only Jo's readings of events to go on, at least when it comes to the privacies of their relationship, and those readings are not always reliable. She confesses to having no interest in sex (she was a 41-year-old virgin when she married) and to experiencing pain in its throes; she admits to "not enjoying attacks from the rear." I suppose it is just such information that supports Levin's claim that this is "an intimate biography."

These matters are limited, of course, in what they reveal about the Hoppers. Still, they will provide the reader with many opportunities for facile and misleading reductions, which, one can be fairly sure, will reflect badly on the particular moral climate in which we live. Much more telling is the following passage from Jo's diary:

> Heavens knows why I am impelled to keep records that could have interest to no one. I never reread. They're not specially about the life as he knows it of a great man. His life [is] so more or less uneventful as [a] day by day record. He reads all the time, reads while I try to talk with him, does crossword puzzles, enlarges his culture, contemplates silently himself, devoid of any generous concern for anybody else... & everyone approves of the cut of him, tho his interest in them is of the slightest.... He shares nothing of importance to another's ego.... He's highly competitive—I win, you lose. He's fed on his victory over me. And I never dreamed competition was to enter in our lives. I [am] so deeply grateful for everything vainglorious that came his way & did everything to further his interests. What a blow to have it slowly dawn on me, he couldn't trump up any live interest in anyone but himself. In summing it all up, I realize with much bitterness I've been swindled of all the deeply human values.... Takes me and my efforts in his behalf entirely for granted. And in my own eyes, I'm humiliated.... While here I am alone. I feel all this. I can't bear that he, the leitmotif of my life can be so ruthlessly selfish ... and limited in his own ability to include me in his own soul—make the effort of a partnership.... The sum total of his success is so without warmth, that the chill is destroying me—the chill of this realization. Some one of the I suppose lesser critics said his light had brilliance—but no warmth. This understanding struck me as psychic. Oh, I should bring him warmth, should I? And why? ... Such thought of generosity outrages me—why ever breathe into such a monster that which he is incapable. He is capable only of taking, otherwise the line is dead.



Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

EDWARD HOPPER, *SECOND STORY SUNLIGHT*, 1960

This is revealing. It is also quite affecting. But how does such information enable us to read Hopper's paintings with greater acuity? And what access does it provide to his particular genius? The answer is, none at all. Levin's book is thorough and compassionate, but it does not, it cannot, tell us what we long to know. How did the paintings happen? Out of what urging and from what network of causes were Hopper's paintings born? This is a scrupulously attentive biography of the man Hopper was when he was like other men, or more like other men. We learn a great deal about his work habits, something about his reading preferences and political allegiances, what his yearly earnings were in the late '20s and early '30s, and other such things. But to know the Hopper that matters to most of us—the other Hopper, the one who painted—we must search the paintings. Hopper insisted, after all, that he painted himself. But even then, the views we get are shadowy, incomplete, contradictory. In his paintings, it is Hopper's unknowability that confronts us. And that unknowability is palpable; we feel its power, its presence, its negative attraction.

And yet the reasons for the recent Hopper show at the Whitney have nothing do to with offering the public another view of Hopper's projections of secrecy. And they have little to do with giving the public a view of the paintings. Reading the material surrounding the show, one feels that the Whitney, realizing that the twentieth century was drawing to a close, decided that showing Hopper might be a tasteful and uncontroversial way of saying goodbye to it; that Hopper's paintings, since they are intensely elegiac, might supply the right images for remembrance; that, if the twentieth century is to be remembered at all, it should be remembered as Hopper-like. We can look at his paintings and think: *The twentieth century was a pretty good time. There were fewer people then, buildings had strong architectural features and were often dramatically situated by railroad tracks or overlooking the sea, and, hey, there were no planes, hardly any cars, train platforms were empty. It was great. What few folks there were waited in hotel lobbies or worked late in offices,*

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in offices, women yearned for something by their windows, men wore vests and ties, and, sometimes, hats. You could afford to live in that world. Nothing was overdone, expensive, or fancy. Nobody messed with anybody else. It was the best of times. Forget the Depression. Forget the war. Forget a lot of other things. And so it goes. Hopper is transformed into a fantasist, a kind of highbrow Norman Rockwell, and his paintings are transformed into documents, and he becomes what he always insisted he wasn't, an illustrator of the "American scene."

Deborah Lyons's *Edward Hopper and the American Imagination*, the "catalog" accompanying the Whitney show, is a book of poems and stories by various American writers inspired by various Hopper pictures. The book begins: "In the vision of Edward Hopper, twentieth-century America has found a compelling reflection of itself. There may be no other American painter whose imagery has imprinted itself so powerfully on the way we picture our world." And so on. The clichés used to describe the character of Hopper's work form a bland and misleading litany: "simple and straightforward," "a plain language," "economy of means," "spare visual language," "unblinking look at modern life," "starkly beautiful" and the rest.

Surely there is more to Hopper than obvious truth-telling and a puritanical preference for reduction. What people see in his pictures is *not* clear. That they see a cleansed and relatively harmless version of the world in which they live is doubtless true; and it is also probably the case that they see order where their own experience is threatened by chaos. This might account for some of the interest in his work. And the fact that cityscapes in Hopper are aestheticized out of the domain of realism and into the twilight world of dream or recollection surely has to do with our tolerance for the very thing we turn against in our daily lives. But such a point of regard domesticates and cheapens Hopper. For it is equally true that there is an aspect of Hopper that deeply disturbs us, and it compels our attention as much as his benignity does. For Lyons, it is "an oddly cold sexual tension [that] simmers under the surface" or, as it is with many who have written about him, the portrayal of "our ultimate aloneness." Such banality is a construct of the narratives that we create around his work. They have little to do with the work itself.

It is the impulse to create a network of contributing and qualifying factors for Hopper that diminishes his work. Deborah Lyons tends to read Hopper's paintings as continuous with the world instead of as a world unto themselves; but Hopper's work does not need such contextualizing, as if it were made of puzzling slices of life that had to be put back in place. Most of the poets and fiction writers included in *Edward Hopper and the American Imagination* are no more successful than Deborah Lyons is in treating Hopper's paintings as paintings. Galway Kinnell's poem is about a hitchhiking episode in Kansas and bears no semblance to any work of Hopper's that I know, nor does its tone suggest the engaged and grinding calm of Hopper. Tess Gallagher writes a poem peppered with red condoms, which ends with the poet "doffing" her hat to Hopper, "unfurling Modigliani brows." Leonard Michaels's strong story is, of all the writing, the closest to Hopper, and actually says some interesting things about *New York Movie* (1939), one of Hopper's greatest paintings, but it, too, leaves Hopper behind as it pursues its own imperatives and becomes a story in which the usherette of the painting is invested with the narrator's own adolescent uncertainty.

According to Lyons, what these writers have done is "give voice to the very direct and deeply felt relationship viewers have with Hopper paintings." Is that so? Where, exactly, is this relationship forged? Surely not at the Whitney, where crowds milled around hoping for an unobstructed view of a painting here, a painting there, where fortune-cookie-like snippets of Frost, E.B. White, Rilke and

"Morocco is unforgettable and so is Mary Cross' book."
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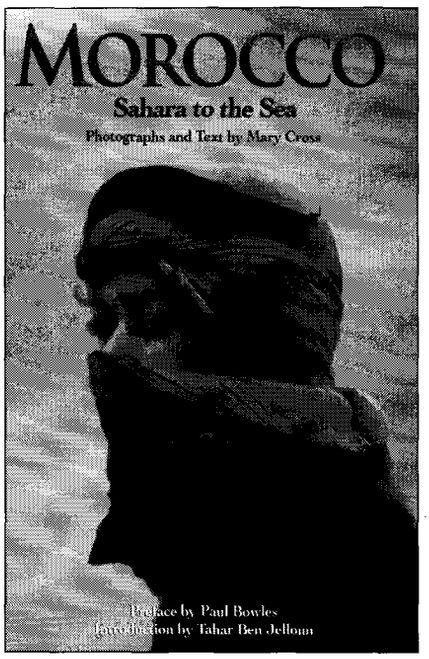

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—Clifford Geertz

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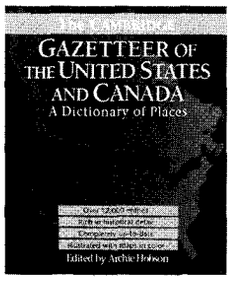

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others appear on the walls, creating, like verbal muzak, a viewer-friendly atmosphere, a sappy ersatz-existential sadness, a tone that detracts from the visual urgency of the paintings, undermining their presence and hinting at the spirit which would best inform any "deeply felt relationship" the viewers might intend. The Whitney also constructed, in the middle of the exhibition, an amphitheater in which a totally unnecessary movie about Hopper was shown and from which lots of distracting sound emanated.

Perhaps the distractions were intentional. The Whitney may feel that no viewer should forge too deep a relationship with this master of portraying "our ultimate aloneness." It is hard, as it has been on many occasions, to know what the Whitney has in mind. The paintings were grouped by shared but almost indiscernible approximations of time and day. What's wrong with a chronological ordering? Too old fashioned? Not subtle enough? Why can't the viewer be trusted simply to look at the paintings? If the museum feels impelled to instruct the viewer, why can't its instruction have something to do with looking, and with seeing? The reason is obvious. No one at the Whitney knows how to look. It's been years since anyone at the Whitney even tried.

So where does one see Hopper? Probably one makes pilgrimages to the museums in which one's favorite Hoppers hang. It might be cheaper (but not much cheaper) to buy the *catalogue raisonné* that Norton has just published, and have all of Hopper, the illustrations and the watercolors as well as the paintings. The reproductions of the paintings are good, and Gail Levin's notes are informative. In these volumes one may see the entire sweep of his vision, which, once it achieved maturity in the mid-'20s, neither deepened substantially nor lapsed into predictability. But the experience of looking at paintings can never be duplicated by looking at reproductions; and this is especially true in the case of Hopper, because of the representational character of his work. Seen in a book, his paintings appear to have more in common with photographs than they actually do. Their surfaces are given a uniformity that they do not possess, and, sometimes, a glossiness that distorts the reticence or the understated quality of the original.

When we confront a real painting by Hopper after having seen it in reproduction, we are often shocked by our mistaken assumption as to its scale. *The House By the Railroad* (1925) is a small picture, 24 x 29 inches, but it has about it a monumentality, a grandeur that could not have been anticipated. Scale is not part of our experience of looking at pictures in a book. Since everything fits the book, everything is roughly the same size. But the regal aspect of this homely American house is accented by the modesty of the canvas, especially in a room where the other canvases are larger.

For similar reasons, the large but intimate *Hotel Room* (1931) also astonishes. We have no preparation for experiencing the judicious disposition of shapes that add up to such a large pictorial finality. If one can get close enough to an actual Hopper, one experiences surprising contrasts in the way paint is applied—from walls that are loosely brushed washes to the precise modeling of facial features. The tightness or compactness of the reproductions is missing in the actual paintings, where so much is approximate or notational rather than fully rendered. In the paintings, the disposition of light is absolutely just, the weight of objects have an evident exactitude, an unfussy, even fulsome severity, but probably the most important aspect of regarding the originals is their color. (A comparison of reproductions of the same painting will show how unreliably color is reproduced.)

Suppose we were permitted the luxury of looking without distractions at Hopper. What would we see? How would we go about engaging with what is before us? In *Second Story Sunlight* (1960), two identical white gables, each with two windows on the second floor and one on the third, face the sun. Their roofs are a dark blue-gray and their shadowed sides are a violet blue. On the porch in front of the gable closest to the viewer, an old woman in a navy dress sits reading and a young woman in shorts and a halter sits sideways on the porch railing. Behind the twin gables is a group of trees that seems, because of its upward slant, to be growing on a hillside. Dark and forbidding, it appears to manifest order as much as wildness, perhaps because of the measured progression of tree trunks.

In fact, the whole painting is especially well-ordered. But the two figures do not seem to contribute to the equilibrium of the arrangement. They generate a different sort of energy, one that enlivens and, consequently, tends to undermine the stability of the scene. That is, in a painting in which everything seems perfectly resolved in relation to everything else, we have these two women whose relationship to each other is unclear. The older woman is reading a magazine, the younger one gazes beyond the picture frame. The fact that they are individually occupied but share the same porch is enough to offer up narrative possibilities that would carry the viewer far beyond

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We believe that the optimum **rate** of population growth for the United States (and for the world) is **negative** until such time as the **scale** of economic activity, and its environmental effects, is reduced to a level that would be sustainable indefinitely.

We are convinced that if present rates of population and economic growth are allowed to continue, the end result, within the lifetimes of many of us, would inevitably be near universal poverty in a hopelessly polluted nation and world.

We agree with Professor Herman Daly who has pointed out that the human economy is a subset of the biosphere, and that **the current scale of economic activity relative to the biosphere is already far too large to be sustainable indefinitely**.

Stabilization Is Not Enough

We believe that calls for merely slowing down rapid population growth, or for stabilizing population at present or even higher levels, **are totally inadequate**.

Such proposals, while presented as a solution, **fail to address the central issue**: how to create a national (and world) economy that will be sustainable indefinitely.

At present or at even higher levels of population, neither the application of science and technology, nor simplifying life-styles, nor any combination of the two, can offer any hope of reducing our impact on the environment to a sustainable level.

We Need a Smaller Population

We recognize that our impact on the environment in terms of pollution and resource depletion is the product of our numbers times our per capita consumption of energy and materials. Thus, there are only three ways by which that impact can be reduced:

- By reducing the size of our population by a negative rate of population growth.
- By reducing over consumption (in the United States and other developed countries) by simplifying life-styles.
- By reducing resource depletion and pollution per unit of consumption through more efficient use of energy and materials.

Population size is by far the most critical of those three variables. **Nevertheless, our present scale of economic activity is so large relative to the biosphere that all three measures are needed in order to reduce it to a sustainable level.**

An Urgent Need

Over 20 years ago, when our U.S. population was far smaller, (about 202 million, rather than our present 264 million), Professor John Holdren correctly saw the urgent need for a negative rate of population growth. At that time he wrote,

"...What is surprising...is that there is not more agreement concerning what the rate of change of population size should be. For given the uncertain, but possibly grave, risks associated with substantially increasing our impact on the environment, and given that population growth aggravates or impedes the solution of a wide variety of other problems...it should be obvious that the optimum **rate** of population growth is zero or negative until such time as the uncertainties have been removed and the problems solved."

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We must have, first of all, a nationally determined population goal for our country, accompanied by effective policies to achieve it.

We urge Congress and President Clinton to set, as a top priority national goal, **the achievement of a negative rate of population growth for the United States until such time as the scale of our economic activity is reduced to a sustainable level**.

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what he sees. And narrative possibility assumes a disproportionate amount of power when one considers how small the figures are. Also small, but evocative, is the window on the left through which we see a picture, a patch of sunlight and the back of a chair. Still, the two forms of visual engagement—the spatial and the narrative—balance each other, neither one achieving dominance. When the narratives that we supply go too far, it is the painting's geometry that calls us back, and when the painting's geometry gets dull, it is the painting's narrative potential that engages us. To favor one over the other upsets the painting's difficult balance.

And, since it addresses the issue of seeing or looking in a way that embodies all the refinement and circumspection that we tend to overlook in Hopper, let us consider *New York Movie* (1939). It is related to some of his other paintings—most closely, perhaps, to *Automat* (1927). It has something of *Automat*'s somberness—the row of lights, the thoughtful woman—but here there are more elements to consider.

On one side of the painting stands an usherette absorbed in thought; on the other, a scattering of barely visible moviegoers, seated in several rows of red plush chairs, watching a movie. The sides are separated by a heavy vertical—the end of a wall and an engaged column of elaborate design. The two sides, though they occupy the same overall space, differ markedly. The moviegoers look at the screen in front of them; the usherette, taken up with her thoughts, looks within. The three lights over the audience step downward in perspectival progression, creating a space that is horizontally deep. The three lights behind the usher are clustered and shed an hourglass of light that, along with the sharp, upward-pointing arrow of the parted curtains and the stairs establishes a space that is distinctly vertical. Off to the side, where the usherette stands, it is chapel-like. Where the audience sits, the gloom is practically subterranean.

We are drawn to the usherette's preference for privacy. Her inwardness wins our sympathy, despite the fact that our position as viewers more closely parallels that of the moviegoers. After all, we, too, are looking at a picture, and yet the way we stand before a painting may resemble more the usherette's stance. Perhaps if I said that we look *into* instead of *at* the painting, our sympathy with the inward-looking usherette might be explained. But the truth is that we are enacting two contrary impulses: we are looking both at *and* in, moving between the two as we shift our attention from one side of the canvas to the other. Instead of witnessing a drama between what geometry wills

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and what narrative proposes, as we do in *Second Story Sunlight* and other Hoppers, we experience the two working together. Now it is possible that someone will say that the young woman's eyes are closed and thus she could not be an adequate stand-in for the viewer. True enough, but it is also true that we really know what we see when we turn away from what has been before us and look inward. It is in the confinement of our own thought that images are retained and eventually become part of our knowledge of the world. •

Nothing Neo

BY PAUL STARR

Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea by Irving Kristol

(The Free Press, 493 pp., $25)

Irving Kristol has been a formidable presence in American intellectual life for over forty years. After an early stint as an editor at *Commentary*, he helped to start three other influential magazines—*Encounter*, in 1953; *The Public Interest*, in 1965; and *The National Interest*, in 1985. A Trotskyist in his student days, Kristol has moved in stages to the right, first becoming a liberal anticommunist, then a conservative antiliberal. At one point in this evolution, in the early 1970s, he embraced the label "neoconservative," which the socialist Michael Harrington had introduced as a pejorative. Since then he has happily made himself so entirely synonymous with neoconservatism that he now offers his latest collection of essays as its, not his, "autobiography."

But a label is not necessarily evidence of a coherent philosophy, or of a living one. As Kristol himself acknowledges, neoconservatism has been swallowed by the larger conservative movement. And his own views have evolved far beyond what he and others originally conceived as neoconservatism. Several of his early collaborators at *The Public Interest*, notably Daniel Bell and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, have long since parted ways. And well they might, considering the tone and the substance of Kristol's writing in recent years.

When neoconservatism first took shape in the late 1960s and 1970s, it seemed to be different from the older varieties of the American right. *The Public Interest*, and Kristol himself, accepted the New Deal, but rejected the political and cultural currents of the '60s. And even with respect to the policies of that era, their stance was meliorism, not repudiation. They presented themselves as defending the achievements of a capitalist civilization, often positively described as liberal and secular, from the assaults of a radicalized liberalism. Nearly all were from New York, most were Jewish, and they carried with them a sensibility that was urban and modern, even when arguing on behalf of moral and cultural standards that were traditional or, to use Kristol's preferred term, "bourgeois."

People who know neoconservatism only from that era might be surprised, therefore, to read Kristol's recent fulminations against "secular humanism" and his praise of Christian fundamentalism. Remembering the calm civility of his earlier essays, they might especially fasten on the following passage from an article, written in 1993, with which Kristol concludes his new book: "So far from having ended, my cold war has increased in intensity, as sector after sector of American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos. . . . Now that the other 'Cold War' is over, the real cold war has begun."

Neoconservatives used to reproach the left for drawing a false "moral equivalence" between the United States and the Soviet Union, but what is Kristol's equation of American liberalism and Soviet communism if not false and tendentious? Is he now waging war, even a cold war, against all those Americans, including many of his old friends, who continue to think of themselves as liberals? This kind of talk, like Patrick Buchanan's speech at the Republican convention in 1992, is not simply chilling, it is dangerous. If Americans of different persuasions are mortal enemies, then anything goes.

Those who thought that they understood neoconservatism might also be dumbfounded by the conclusion of Kristol's essay of 1991, "The Future of American Jewry," in which he welcomes a more

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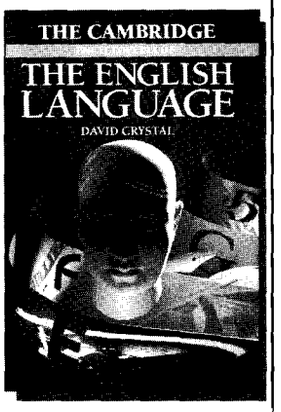

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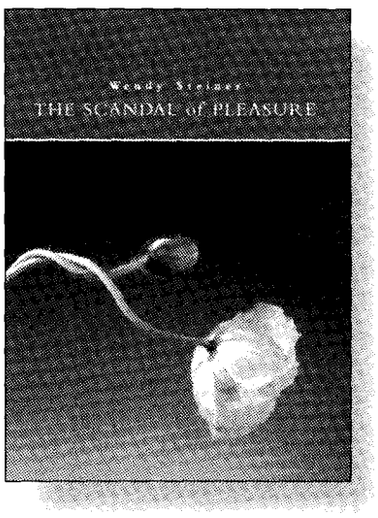

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"porous" relation between church and state "more like that which prevailed in the 19th century" and writes: "If America is going to become more Christian, Jews will have to adapt . . . prudence can be relearned." In the past, he tells us, discrimination against Jews wasn't so bad: "It created hurdles, but not impossible barriers." Besides, in a more Christian America, there would be an upside for Jews: less intermarriage.

I am not sure how many Jews, or neoconservatives, share Kristol's warm feelings for the Christian right and would welcome America becoming a Christian nation where Jews would have to "relearn prudence." (Does this mean that *Commentary* would show Jews how to be less outspoken about their concerns and less overt in their religious practices?) In advising Jews to accept a Christian redefinition of American public life, Kristol may represent a fraction of Jewish opinion, but modern polling techniques are probably incapable of detecting such small quantities.

Perhaps the most revealing self-betrayal in these essays is Kristol's description of his embrace of supply-side economics: "I was not certain of its economic merits but quickly saw its political possibilities." You see, unlike traditional "naysaying" balanced-budget conservative economics, supply-side economics "offered neoconservatism" a way to give the voters the goodies that they wanted. That supply-siderism could "offer" neoconservatism anything is a strange notion if one thinks of neoconservatism as a set of ideas, but not if one thinks of it as a partisan faction. In *The Public Interest*'s recent thirtieth-anniversary issue, Kristol is also explicit about his own "cavalier attitude toward the budget deficit and other monetary or financial problems": "political effectiveness was the priority, not the accounting deficiencies of government."

But what exactly does supply-side economics have to do with neoconservatism as an "idea"? Could it be the devotion of supply-siders to the gold standard? Critics who were skeptical of the excesses of the 1960s might have been equally skeptical of the effusions of the 1980s. There would have been some consistency, and integrity, in that. But with "political possibilities" as Kristol's priority, what neoconservatism became in his hands had little to do with principle and much to do with strategy.

No doubt, as he claims, he saw the possibilities in the Christian conservatives, and quickly, too. The urge to cement an alliance with them has been so strong that he has become—the phrase applies exactly—a fellow traveler of the Christian right. Neoconservatives have been

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unrelenting in their criticism of bogus science, or at least science they disagree with. In 1986, however, in a column in *The New York Times* not reprinted in this collection, Kristol suggested that evolution was only, after all, a hypothesis—indeed, one with lots of problems—and therefore, "As things now stand, the religious fundamentalists are not far off the mark when they assert that evolution, as generally taught, has an unwarranted anti-religious edge to it." In other words, in the debate over creationism and evolution, it was biology teachers who had a lot of apologizing to do. This is a classic fellow traveler apology—shifting the onus of responsibility to the other side. Perhaps one reason why Jews remain liberal is that they know liberals will at least uphold the values of education, scientific inquiry and the separation of church and state, whereas of Kristol and the conservatives they know no such thing.

Kristol's book throws doubt on the coherence of his neoconservatism in other ways. Consider the relation between Kristol's views on social policy twenty years ago and today, when he is basking in the glow of the Republican ascendancy in Washington. Of course, we are all entitled to change our minds, but those who offer the world an autobiography may be expected to explain such changes, or at least to acknowledge them. In a 1976 essay reprinted here, Kristol wonders what might have happened if the money spent on antipoverty programs had been used for "just two universal reforms"—child allowances and "some form of national health insurance," which might have started small but like Social Security eventually grown large. "We would all—including the poor among us—feel that we were making progress, and making progress together, rather than at the expense of one another," he observes in a passage that would get liberal heads nodding today.

This support for expansive, universal social policy is scarcely Kristol's position now. Elsewhere in his book, Kristol claims not only to have anticipated the current Republican revolution, but also to have laid the intellectual foundations for it; and yet this Congress is hardly pursuing the social, not to mention budgetary, policies that he used to praise. But he pays no mind to the difference.

Kristol's elision of this turnabout is altogether typical. The book opens with an autobiographical sketch describing his life in the world of ideas as he changed from neo-Marxist to neoliberal to neoconservative. Yet he remembers only that his views were right at every point and that he was earlier than others to see the illusions of the positions that he abandoned. He seems never to have experienced any crisis of belief, as if it were all as easy as changing overcoats. And therefore he leaves the impression that the views he successively abandoned were never deeply held in the first place.

Which brings us to what many might take to be Kristol's central concerns—his views of religion and morals, the subject of many essays in this book, so important that he has reprinted most from earlier collections. Throughout, Kristol airily dismisses liberal moral philosophy with a wave of his hand as hopelessly contradictory. Yet what are we to make of his own personal ideas? In his autobiographical introduction, Kristol describes himself as "neo-orthodox" in his religious views, adding that he is "a nonobservant Jew, but not a nonreligious one." Now, to be a nonobservant orthodox Jew is a contradiction in terms. And, ironically, in an essay reprinted here, Kristol writes that "orthodoxies have known forever that virtue is a practical, existential discipline, not simply a matter of faith"—a strange comment for someone who has already confided that he does not practice his faith. He goes on to condemn "secular humanism"—a term redolent with irony here, since Kristol's admired teacher Sidney Hook was the epitome of a secular humanist—for discarding "the very idea of tradition" and thus creating "moral

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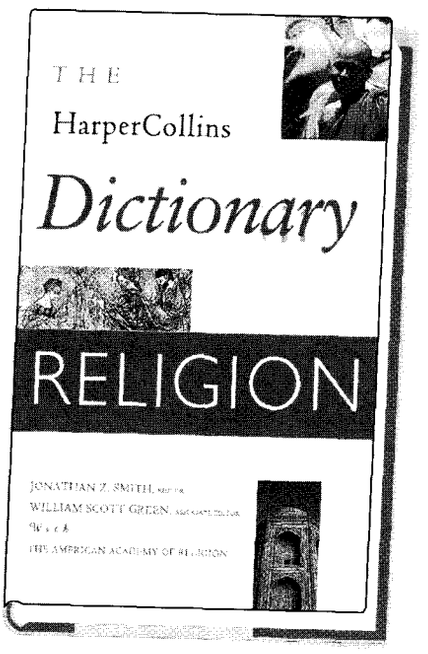

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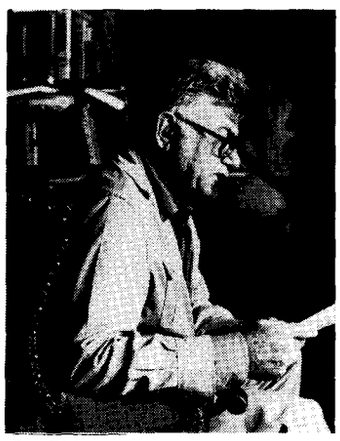

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anarchy." But why does Kristol put "neo" before "orthodox" in his own self-description, except to escape from the authority of the tradition that is, he says, his own? His position is a hopeless muddle.

So what is neoconservatism, or what was it? Kristol is one of those few enterprising intellectuals who have so successfully identified themselves with an "ism" that they confuse their personal impulses, alliances and maneuvers with the elaboration of a coherent view of the world. If neoconservatism no longer exists, it is partly because Kristol failed to uphold it consistently himself, while keeping possession of the brand name and thereby, so to speak, confusing the market. In the end, he has lapsed into a conservatism that has nothing "neo" about it. He has dissolved his schismatic "tendency" for the greater good of a larger political movement. A Marxist would appreciate that.

PAUL STARR is co-editor of *The American Prospect* and professor of sociology at Princeton University.

The View From The Attic

BY ROBERT ALTER

An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the *Diary*
by Lawrence Graver

(University of California Press, 254 pp., $28)

The Diary of a Young Girl
by Anne Frank
edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler
translated by Susan Massotty

(Doubleday, 340 pp., $25)

More than half a century now separates us from the mass murders perpetrated by the Nazis, but judging by the continuing tide of historical studies, memoirs, novels and films, our collective fascination with the subject has grown with the passage of time. Historians have genuinely advanced understanding in numerous ways, but the popular imagination of the Nazi genocide continues to be caught between sensationalism and sentimentality. Readers and filmgoers have tended to opt for the *frisson* of ultimate obscenities or the uplift of a message that conjures away the horrors; vistas of stacked corpses and the odor of burnt flesh, or hope eternal from the heart of hell.

It is the second of these alternatives that is reflected in the persistent appeal of the Anne Frank story. The sad story of Meyer Levin's obsession with *The Diary of Anne Frank*, laid out with meticulous care by Lawrence Graver, is in most respects the peculiar story of one man's pathology. For all its peculiarity, however, it is also symptomatic in one regard of what our culture ever since the 1950s has sought to make of the destruction of European Jewry.

Meyer Levin (1906-1981) was a Chicago-born novelist and journalist of middling abilities, who achieved a certain reputation in the 1930s as a practitioner of the social realism then in vogue. (He was praised by James T. Farrell.) Early in his career, as Lawrence Graver explains, he was ambivalent about his Jewish origins and made some effort to camouflage them in his writing. By the late '30s, however, he had become a dedicated Zionist (a couple of decades later he would settle in Israel) and was addressing explicitly Jewish themes. Levin suspected, perhaps with some warrant, that editors and reviewers were inclined to shun him because of his flaunted Jewish identity; and such suspicions were later to play an important role in his tormented involvement with the story of Anne Frank.

In 1945, in his capacity as a military reporter, Levin entered Buchenwald with the U.S. Army contingent that liberated the camp. The horrors that he witnessed there would determine the subsequent course of his life, though the mixture of misused idiom and stiff cliché with which he records the experience in his autobiography, *In Search* (1950), does not inspire much confidence in his adequacy

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to the task of writing about this dark subject: "I knew already that I would never penetrate its heart of bile, for the magnitude of this horror seemed beyond human register."

In 1950, while living with his second wife, Tereska Torres, in the south of France, Levin came across Anne Frank's *Diary* in a French translation. He was profoundly moved. More than that, he became convinced, as he would later put it in a legal deposition, that through the *Diary* "the world could finally and clearly absorb the enormity of the mass murders perpetrated by the Nazis." It was, as I will suggest, an extravagant judgment, and it touches on the nexus between Levin's private obsession and the popular cult of Anne Frank that flourished in the '50s and still has not entirely faded.

Levin made some energetic efforts to promote interest in the *Diary* in America; eventually, without his intervention, Doubleday accepted it, and the first English version, nearly a third shorter than the "definitive edition" that has been issued this year, appeared in June 1952. Levin managed to persuade *The New York Times Book Review* to give him the book for review. His front-page celebration of it as a poignant and luminous testimony from the heart of historical evil helped make it an instant best-seller. The first printing was sold out within a day after his review appeared.

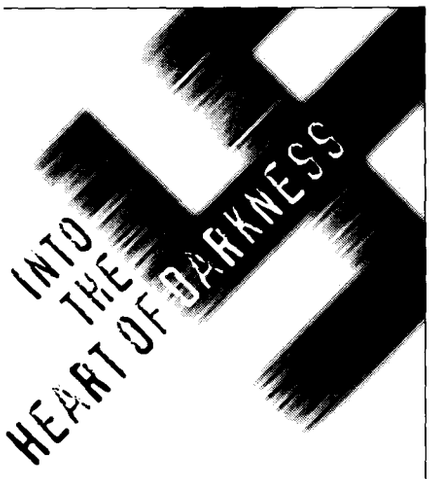
From this point onward, everything becomes tortuous and morally murky. I will offer only a summary of the convoluted story that Graver, working with archival materials as well as with published documents, skillfully reports in all its dreary details. Levin came to believe, without warrant, that there had been an understanding between him and Otto Frank, Anne's father, that he would have the rights to an American dramatic adaptation of the *Diary*. Initially, he had very cordial relations with Frank, but his own actions were destined to turn these into bitter recrimination and legal contention. Levin prepared the script of a play based on the book, but most of the interested professional parties who looked at it felt it had serious structural and dramatic weaknesses.

Acting for Otto Frank, Doubleday gave the stage rights to the producer Kermit Bloomgarden, and he rejected Levin's script out of hand. Bloomgarden engaged the Hollywood screenwriters Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett to prepare a dramatization of the *Diary*. Their previous collaboration on films such as *The Father of the Bride* and *It's a Wonderful Life* might not have constituted self-evident credentials for doing a play about genocide, but they were savvy professionals; and after numerous rewritings their version, opening in 1955, became an immense hit on Broadway, with Susan Strasberg starring as Anne.

Levin had hoped to make his career, which had been only intermittently successful, with the play. His response to being excluded was a sustained apoplectic explosion that lasted for the rest of his life. He spread calumnies, in the press and by word of mouth, about Otto Frank, about the people at Doubleday, about everyone involved with the Goodrich-Hackett play. He claimed that Lillian Hellman, who had read a draft of their play without much affecting its shape, had conspired to "de-Judaize" the dramatization of the *Diary*. (In fact, the greatest influence upon the "universalizing" of the play was its director, Garson Kanin.) Levin enlisted writers, rabbis, pillars of the organized Jewish community, to protest on his behalf. He brought one suit after another in an effort to regain what he claimed were his just rights to the dramatization of the *Diary* and to receive compensation for what he argued was incalculable damage to his career. Eventually, a Hebrew version of his play would be performed in Tel Aviv, at first illegally.

In his persecution-mania, Levin came to identify himself with Anne Frank: he, too, was the victim, in his own way, of an implacable campaign of destruction directed at Jews. He told the theater critic Brooks Atkinson that his play was "killed by the same arbitrary disregard that brought an end to Anne and six million others." People close to him, not to speak of a whole parade of psychoanalysts, tried to dissuade him from this madness. The judgment expressed by Barbara Epstein, then Barbara Zimmerman, who was an editor at Doubleday in the early '50s, was shared by most of those who knew Levin: "He is impossible to deal with in any terms, officially, legally, morally, personally." His friend Martha Gellhorn told him that he was like an alcoholic, at once nurturing and denying his addiction, and exacting a terrible price for it from his family. His wife herself urged him to put the whole business behind him and wrote to him of the "wasted years, sick years, dreadful years," adding the rebuke, "it is you yourself you should be suing for damages."

All this, quite obviously, was an expression of deep and incurable paranoia; and there are a good many indications in Levin's reactions to the reception of his work before 1952 that if it hadn't been Anne Frank, sooner or later he would have found some other obsessive focus for his persecution-mania. But if Levin's expectations of what he deserved to get



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out of *The Diary of a Young Girl* were a reflex of his deranged grandiosity, his notion of the supreme importance of the book as historical testimony was something else entirely: a sign of the times. Levin's worship of the book was implicated in a common predisposition, of the '50s and to a large extent ever since, to naturalize these unspeakable events.

Graver sensibly concludes his discriminating and instructive study by suggesting that Levin attributed to the *Diary* a "stature ... as symbolic narrative ... in excess of what it actually represented," for the obvious reason that "a girl's journal about her family in hiding that ends with an editor's note about their fate cannot convey the full actuality or meaning of a catastrophe in which millions of individuals and much of their culture were obliterated in camps built and operated by one of the great nations of Europe." It is worth reflecting what it might be about the *Diary* itself that has encouraged millions of readers in America and elsewhere to seize on it as though it could really manifest the actuality of the mass murder of European Jewry. Hannah Arendt's remark that the cult of Anne Frank, especially in Germany, was "cheap sentimentality at the expense of great catastrophe" is blunt, but not far off the mark. It requires, however, some explanation.

The new English version of *The Diary of a Young Girl* is based on a Dutch edition of 1991 that incorporated, for the first time, certain vitriolic comments by Anne about her fellow-tenants of the Secret Annex and reflections on her own nascent sexuality (including one fleeting impulse of adolescent lesbianism). Otto Frank, in the early aftermath of the war, had seen fit to delete these passages. The result of their inclusion is a more believable self-representation of Anne as a sometimes sharp-edged, touchy, lively girl. The new version is less sugar, more vinegar. And this is enhanced in Susan Massotty's translation, which, at least to judge by how it reads as English, nicely conveys the colloquial vivacity and spunkiness of the young diarist. Anne's estrangement from her mother, a familiar moment of female early adolescence, is more evident in the new version ("More than once, after a series of absurd reproaches, I've snapped at Mother: 'I don't care what you say. Why don't you wash your hands of me—I'm a hopeless case.' "). Her burgeoning literary self-consciousness as a diarist, writing and revising with an eye to eventual publication, is also now clearer.

What is appealing about Anne Frank is the absolute teenage normalcy that she manifests in her diary. In fact, she registers the historical disaster around her only to the degree that it concretely compels her attention. The earliest entries, from the period before she goes into hiding with her family in July 1942, are full of anxious observations not about the Nazis but about school grades and promotion and friendships; the ominous German occupation is reflected only in her complaint about the inconvenience of being forbidden as a Jew to ride the streetcar. Once the family has taken refuge in the Secret Annex, Anne of course devotes space to the constant fear of detection, the physical hardships and what she hears of the course of the war. Even so, she concentrates largely on her relations with her parents and sister and the other four hideouts, on her fluctuating infatuation with one of them (Peter van Daan), on her developing sense of self as an adolescent, on her sexual feelings and on her literary ambitions. All this is humanly understandable and perfectly natural, but how is it that Meyer Levin and so many others could have seen it as a document through which "the world could finally and clearly absorb the enormity of the mass murders perpetrated by the Nazis"?

Much of the popular attraction of the *Diary* derives, no doubt, from the safe distance of indirection from the horrors of genocide that it preserves for its readers. There are no skeletal camp inmates, no gas chambers, no diabolical medical experiments and acts of sadism. There is only the concluding editorial note that after the S.S. arrested the eight tenants of the Secret Annex on August 4, 1944, and their deportation to the death-camps, only Otto Frank survived. And so I am tempted to say that the widespread disposition to take the *Diary* as the emblematic testimony of the murdered 6 million betrays a failure of moral imagination—as though without it we could not imagine concretely that there were countless young girls and boys (not to speak of the adults and the old people) with hopes and dreams for a personal future who were torn from life before they could really begin to live it.

I do not mean to sound impervious to the poignancy of the *Diary*. Still, many diaries of Jews who perished have been published that reflect a complexity of adult perspective and, in some instances, a direct grappling with the barbarity of Nazism; and these are absent from Anne Frank's writing. For this reason, the emblematic power attributed to her book seems a little odd. I suspect it can be explained by two traits of the diarist: her adolescence and the marginal nature of her Jewish identity. These characteristics of their heroine exerted a magnetic

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appeal on Meyer Levin as on Goodrich and Hackett and on the millions who have come to know Anne's story through the book or the play.

Precisely because the writer is in her early teens, *The Diary of a Young Girl* provides just the sort of feel-sad, feel-good representation of genocide that American audiences (and, to a large extent, European audiences) were looking for in the 1950s. Anne may have been a bright and admirably introspective girl, but there is not much in her diary that is emotionally demanding, and her reflections on the world have the quality of banality that one would expect from a 14-year-old. What makes the *Diary* moving is the shadow cast back over it by the notice of her death at the end. Try to imagine (as Philip Roth did, for other reasons, in *The Ghost Writer*) an Anne Frank who survived Bergen-Belsen, and, let us say, settled in Cleveland, became a journalist, married and had two children. Would anyone care about her wartime diary except as an account of the material circumstances of hiding out from the Nazis in Amsterdam?

Looking out from an attic window over the rooftops of Amsterdam, Anne reflects: "As long as this exists, this sunshine and this cloudless sky, and as long as I can enjoy it, how can I be sad?" Elsewhere, thinking about the kind of person she is, she writes: "I'm happy, and I intend to stay that way! I was born happy, I love people, and I have a trusting nature, and I'd like everyone else to be happy too." And in the most famous of these affirmations, in one of her last entries, used by Goodrich and Hackett as the climax of their play, she acclaims: "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are good at heart." There is a kind of fortuitous complicity, I think, between these understandably sentimental simplifications of a young girl's naïve idealism and the ersatz idealism that is the stock-in-trade of Broadway and Hollywood and the publishing industry.

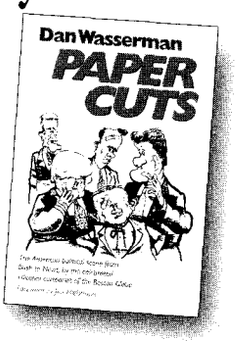
It is true that Goodrich and Hackett, faithful to what they construed to be the sensibility of the American popular audience, further simplified what was simple enough in Anne Frank. As Graver notes, they cut off the text of the *Diary* with the resonant statement that "people are truly good at heart," excluding the paragraph that follows in which Anne grimly writes, "I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too." But this simplification through deletion is a change in degree, not in kind. For, after the seemingly apocalyptic reflection, Anne goes on to reaffirm her idealistic faith: "And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more." One may respect the sincerity of feeling in a diarist who is, after all, scarcely more than a child, and yet note how beautifully such expressions feed into the Hollywoodization of the Holocaust, for which the real meaning of industrialized mass murder is the noble assertion against all odds of the eternal spirit of love and hope, with lyric violins in the background and a technicolor sun breaking through the somber clouds.

Though there is surely something to be said for a document that enables us to identify imaginatively with a victim of these terrible events, the adolescent Anne may too readily inspire sympathy of an adolescent sort. Recently I came across an unforgettable example. The popular novelist Pat Conroy confessed to the *Forward* that he "fell in love" with Anne Frank when his mother first read him the *Diary* as a child, and he added: "In the book there are these little pictures and Anne looks so nice, her dark eyes smiling.... I used to imagine, if only I'd been in the attic with Anne, instead of that boy who obviously didn't cut the mustard with her. I could have helped her have more fun."

The other chief source of the *Diary*'s wide appeal is its anodyne universalism. Otto Frank repeatedly insisted that his daughter's diary was a story of general human interest, not a story about Jewish suffering, and with only minor qualifications I think that he was right. Anne is acutely aware, of course, that her life is threatened because she is a Jew, and even before she went into hiding, Nazi regulations obliged her to attend a Jewish secondary school. The Franks were in no way self-denying or self-hating Jews, but they were thoroughly acculturated as Western Europeans.

For Anne, however, being a Jew is like being freckled or being left-handed. It has no specific content or deep resonance. Historical circumstances had turned it into a grave liability, as would be the case for a left-handed person under a regime that suddenly declared all such sinister deviants were to be rounded up for extermination. One of Meyer Levin's bitter complaints about the Goodrich-Hackett treatment of the *Diary* was that they had eliminated its Jewish character. It is true that, in response to pressure from Garson Kanin, the play's director, they took out a reference to being persecuted "because we're Jews" and substituted the pristine universalism of the following words: "We're not the only people that've had to suffer. Right down through the ages there have been people that've had to suffer. Some-

Politics is a funny business



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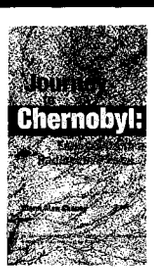

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times one race.... Sometimes another." But a reading of the *Diary* shows that, however cloying this saccharine concoction may be, it is not exactly a violation of the spirit of the book.

There are references to the Jews in the *Diary*, but they are few and far between. Moreover, Anne is ambivalent about whether she really wants to embrace the idea of being a Jew or transcend it. Characteristically, in a late entry, she first says, "We've been strongly reminded of the fact that we're Jews in chains, chained to one spot, without any rights," and she looks forward to a time after the war "when we'll be people again and not just Jews!" But then she swings in the opposite direction and wonders whether someday the experience of suffering will make the Jews moral exemplars, "And we'll have to keep on being Jews, but then, we'll want to be." Anne's universalizing bent reflects a continuity of values with her father, who labored to rescue her legacy from the claims of Jewish particularism. The Anne Frank Foundation, which he helped to establish in 1957, declared that its principal purpose "would be to use the name of Anne Frank as a symbol for all constructive activity relating in any way to adolescents..., which furthers inter-group understanding in an atmosphere of freedom and hope."

Both the universalizing Goodrich-Hackett play and Levin's particularist version make stage-business out of the celebration of Hanukkah in the Secret Annex. The *Diary*, however, includes only a glancing reference to it (it is the sole Jewish ritual mentioned), and then Hanukkah actually loses out in competition with Christmas. Otto Frank had wanted his daughter to be given a Bible for Hanukkah "so I could finally learn something about the New Testament." Both Anne and her sister wondered about the appropriateness of the holiday for the gift, and their father conceded that "Well, maybe St. Nicholas Day would be a better occasion." There is nothing inherently wrong, of course, with Anne Frank's being a residual Jew, and it is horrifying that an ideology of racial hatred should have turned that residue into a death-sentence. Still, it is impossible to "universalize" a document that is already universal.

The fact that she was neither very Jewish nor very mature has neatly suited the purposes of a sanitized, homey, uplifting version of Germany's pathological onslaught on the Jewish people. *The Diary of a Young Girl* does not trouble readers with the bothersome presence of a Jewish people nurturing its various senses of collective identity and its various but distinctive traditions, and singled out for destruction because it is perceived by the murderers as an inassimilable collective Other. The bland message of the Goodrich-Hackett play—that we are all victims at one time or another—is really not very far from Anne's way of seeing things. At the same time, the innocent, uncomplicated idealism of her sense of life as a 14-year-old has been reassuring for millions of readers who prefer not to examine too closely the ugly concreteness of historical evil, or to contemplate the terrible possibility that it may go on and on.

Anne Frank invites us to look at the sunshine and the cloudless sky and the resilient goodness of the spirit of man. Considering what the spirit of man perpetrated from 1933 to 1945, and has perpetrated since, I wonder if that is where we really need to look.

ROBERT ALTER's translation of Genesis, accompanied by a literary commentary, will be published by W.W. Norton next year.

Coming To Terms

BY ERNEST GELLNER

Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War by Abbott Gleason

(Oxford University Press, 307 pp., $25)

The underlying thrust of this book is profoundly, but also inconclusively, Oedipal. Abbot Gleason's preoccupation with totalitarianism arises from the reaction of the generation of the late '50s and '60s in the United States against the orthodoxies and pieties of their fathers. Gleason tells us this of the worldview of his father, a member of the National Security Council under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower: "The struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States for Europe was the

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struggle for civilization and the Third World was irrelevant at best, or in fact a positive hindrance." And this is how he characterizes his father's values: "idealism, commitment, grandiosity, self-righteousness, rigidity, evasiveness, imperial courage, and basic decency."

With a father like that, who could refrain from doing him in? Gleason tells us that he infuriated his father when he turned against what he calls this Manichean vision, and he also came to realize that "totalitarianism" was a notion "absolutely central" to it. So it was through the demolition of this concept that Gleason *père* was to be slain. I must report that the homicide was never carried out. Dagger in hand, Gleason advances against his father, whom he also deeply admires, as is right and proper in these situations, for there would be no drama without a terrible ambivalence. But the dagger eventually dropped from his hand. The "rejection of these views, very much a generational one ... petered out on the shoals of the cultural radicalism of the 1960s."

Still, Gleason is left with the problem of what to do with the concept that was so central to his father's vision. Mixed feelings about the idea of totalitarianism survive his ambivalence toward the father, who had used the idea with such passionate conviction. Gleason could of course go the whole hog, as in Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, the best play ever written about the Oedipus complex and its politics, and return wholeheartedly to the status quo ante. He could affirm that totalitarianism is a valid and illuminating notion after all. But he does not do that, any more than he repudiates it. Instead, he ends, in the final paragraph, with a mild and middle-of-the-road conclusion: "... the debate about totalitarianism ... often displayed regional and national colorings as well as generational ones."

What else is new? Gleason goes on to observe, correctly, that the current debate in Russia concerning its "putative" (note the caution) totalitarianism "seems likely" (I would say: is certain) to become linked to the question of whether Russia's ills are best diagnosed by Westernizers or by Slavophiles. Is it Caesaro-Papist Orthodoxy, or Petrine shock-therapy, that is the source of all ills? Or is it, on the contrary, the way out? Is Pinochet or Solzhenitsyn the beacon?

In fact, the debate is already on. One of the Tolstoys put it in a superb poem which surveys Russia's efforts to find a way out:

> Our land is rich
> what it lacks is order

Someone should now update these marvelous lines, and add accounts of later attempts to put to rights that rich country devoid of order, under Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Gleason's book will provide the future poet with some valuable material.

It must be said that the subtitle of the book is grossly misleading. It suggests disclosures about secret machinations in the Kremlin, the White House and the Pentagon, explaining the twists and turns of the cold war. Anyone expecting this will be disappointed. Instead, what we have is a perceptive and wide-ranging history of the term and the idea of "totalitarianism," in the context of the cold war and beyond. The account is candid and inconclusive and devoid of a strong narrative or a sustained argument. Instead, we get richness and lucidity of documentation, irony and even detachment. This is the book for anyone wishing to have the full history of the term and its deployment.

He will learn a lot. It appears, for instance, that Gramsci was the only Italian leftist to use the notion of totality in a positive, commendatory manner. No doubt he did so in the context of his repudiation of economic reductionism, of his stress on the importance of political culture. Gleason rather uncritically endorses the Frankfurt claim that "[t]he idea of totality ... has become central to the whole history of Marxism." It was indeed central to the Frankfurt version of Marxism: totality was a stick with which to beat empirical social research, insinuating that its conclusions were invalidated by its concern with some insulated aspect of social life, which, being out of context, was bound to be misleading. Totalities are not amenable to conventional research. If they alone contain the truth, however, this confers a monopoly of access on those who hold the key to totality—which is what the Frankfurt school claimed to possess.

Gleason seems generally to endorse the Frankfurt interpretation of Marxism, and invokes the authority of its historian, Martin Jay. I have always had my doubts about this, and I recently had a friendly discussion with Jay, in which I asked him whether there is any text of Marx's in which he actually uses, and recommends, the term "totality." Jay was evasive: there is, it appears, a use of the term in a much more specific sense, something to do with the bourgeois totalization of the economy or some feature of it.... Given Marx's Hegelian and even Aristotelian roots, it is indeed plausible to see him as a holist, but the stress on totality as a methodological key would seem to be a Frankfurt invention, rather than a

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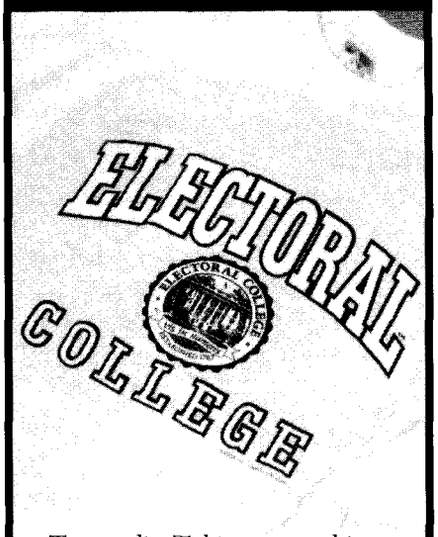

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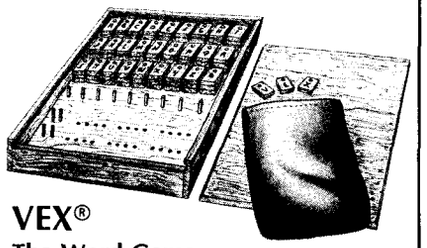

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canonical part of actual Marxist doctrine.

Gleason goes on to say that though such abstract questions are relevant, much of the book is concerned with "somewhat less theoretical political questions." What are they? One of them is the distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism. This issue, of course, has profound implications for American foreign policy and for social theory. But certain distinctions must be made. Is it morally acceptable for a liberal democratic society to accept as allies (or worse, to bring into being) authoritarian states which use exceedingly nasty methods, simply because they oppose a totalitarian rival? Is it even politically expedient? And from the standpoint of social theory, of the attempt to understand how societies actually function, is it illuminating to lump the two together, simply because they are both sinful? Or should one go further and class liberal society with totalitarianism, on account of the sins committed by liberal society itself, whether internally or in its foreign policy?

Radical dissent, to which evidently Gleason belonged at one stage, seduced by its passionate denunciation of local sins into refraining from wholehearted denunciation of the sins of the rival power(s), was inclined to conflate these questions. Gleason's less-than-fully consummated doubts about the notion of totalitarianism, given its erstwhile employment for drawing a moral distinction between the two camps in the cold war, are clearly parts of all this. But he seems unable either to repudiate or to uphold the idea, and so he ends with an impeccable scholarly documentation of the fact that the term has been used in many ways in a wide variety of contexts. Yes, that is certainly so, but it does not answer the question as to whether the core intuitions contained in the idea are valid or not. Gleason appears to wobble on this; my own answer would be a clear yes.

The two significant notions that have emerged from the cold war are totalitarianism and civil society. The first appeared quite early, the second arose from within the Communist world during the decades which preceded its collapse, and remains the best name for what its dissidents desired. The contrast between a society based on a serious monopoly of truth, incarnated in an all-embracing theory, enforced by a single-power economy and ideology hierarchy, and a pluralist society in which the state is concerned with the maintenance of order and the shared infrastructure, but with neither the details of the economy nor with the establishment of Righteousness on Earth, is supremely important. Civil society privatizes virtue, salvation and truth.

Some of Gleason's empirical grounds for questioning the usefulness of the term "totalitarianism" are also less than convincing. He claims that the totalitarian image of the Soviet Union was undermined by the experience of Western scholars who had the opportunity of living there after 1960. He says that they found it not so bad. I first went to the Soviet Union in 1964, I returned repeatedly, and spent an entire year living in a distant and ordinary Moscow suburb, far from the diplomatic or journalist ghettos, during the Perestroika period, but well before the dismemberment of the system. Unquestionably, the system was mild indeed in comparison with the days of Stalin. But totalitarianism was still the *mot juste*.

Unless we retain the notion of totalitarianism, we shall be unable to formulate certain questions which are both inescapable and painful. One is led back to that distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism. The question as to whether authoritarian regimes, using awful methods, but not too seriously committed to a single belief system, and not interfering too much in the economy, are acceptable allies, is now often replaced by another one—are such regimes a good, or the only, early stage on the path to successful development, which in due course makes liberalization feasible or even probable? It is a painful question, but this does not mean that we can possibly afford to deprive ourselves of a term which enables us to ask it. I like the concept of totalitarianism not because it defines or justifies my political align-

Tiber Island

(In memoriam Amy Clampitt)

The Tiber muddles by,
stroking its beard of filthy weed.
The Harbor Police have been rusticated;
their rubber boat is dry.

On the stone overhead,
inscriptions obscured by wild fig
proclaim four times: This is the bridge
Lucius Fabricius made,

and a homeless man in a box
once belonging to some appliance
reads a magazine and reclines
as if at a banquet. A dog barks

at him and at the tedium
from a balcony,
running back and forth, hard to see
behind the leggy geranium,

while below the rapids, a pleasure boat,
like a fat lady stranded on an Imperial stair,
waits for fall rains to lift her over,
winched up with a hook in the throat.

An edge of travertine
visible in a foundation wall
still bears the unrobed, capable
shoulders and the Epidaurian

serpent wound on its staff.
But the god's face has been sheared away.
Little boat, *Isola Tiberina*,
still at large on these waters after

so long, we are simply too late.
He doesn't come any more, to touch
the hopeful in the sleeping porch,
telling this one to eat

pine cones and honey
on a regimen of three days
for hemorrhage, or ashes
and wine in a poultice for pleurisy,

or the blood of a white cockerel
and honey for the sight of the blind,
or the five fingers of one hand
placed on the altar, then on the eyes as well.

We are too late; we know too much.
In this place of refuge and exile,
we are quarantined. There will
be no miracle, not with our knowledge,

and, bound upriver, a crane
seems barely to graze
the sullen eddies in places:
gone; gone; gone; gone.

KARL KIRCHWEY

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ments, but because it helps me think about the options facing human society.

There is also the question as to whether Nazism was as totalitarian as Bolshevism. I am inclined to say that it was not. This issue is quite distinct from the one concerning which of the two systems was morally more repulsive: Is mass murder which implements the avowed values of the perpetrators worse or better than equally (or more) extensive mass murder which goes counter to the proclaimed ultimate values of the system? That is a moral question. There is also the separate sociological question as to which system was internally more plural and capable of change. Moral evaluation and social typology are not the same thing. Nazism was deliberately murderous to those it selected as worthy of murder (the term *todeswert* was actually in use), but it remained curiously plural internally.

I remember hearing a wartime speech of Goering's over the radio: apart from referring enviously, with barely hidden admiration, to Soviet toughness—this was, he said, no longer toughness (*Haerte*) but barbarism, they infuriatingly repaired destroyed railway lines in severe frost with their bare hands—he also said, when we win, we shall live and let live, none of that dreadful puritanism for us. His sybaritic attitude was political as well as personal. Had Hitler won and then died about the time that Stalin died, Goering might have been a more successful Khrushchev.

Totalitarianism was made possible and in the end destroyed by modern technology. In a curious way, the collapse of Marxist societies illustrates, rather than refutes, one of the central tenets of Marxism. If electrification plus soviets equals socialism, computers plus nuclear power equals a plural economy. The infrastructure rules. We should not assume too complacently, however, that future combinations will always favor liberty. One of the best political analysts within Russia, Leonid Gordon, whom strangely enough, Gleason does not quote, argued plausibly that one of the options open to the Soviet leadership was to use very advanced technology as an alternative to liberalization. They failed to do so. The appropriate technology may not have been available, (or they may have been incapable of availing themselves of it), but we should not conclude, in the flush of victory, that this will never change. Gleason's book is an excellent source book and guide to the history of a term and a concept, and a valuable document of the moral-political development of a generation; but we shall have to go on thinking about totalitarianism, and we shall have to go on using the term, with or without his approval.

ERNEST GELLNER was the author most recently of *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (Viking). He died on November 5 in Prague at the age of 69.

TRB *continued from page 6*

social issues—school prayer, gay rights, etc.—in a way even a third-party Buchanan wouldn't be.

Among the problems with this liberal nationalism is the logical tension between being a liberal on social issues and a nationalist on economic and military issues. A key moral precept of modern liberalism is that you could have been born in someone else's shoes. You may be a heterosexual Christian who would be happy for your children to recite the Lord's Prayer in school and who would just as soon homosexuals kept a low profile. Still, you oppose school prayer and you support gay rights, because you have enough imagination to realize that you could have been born a Jew or a Muslim or gay. Well, guess what: you could also have been born a Mexican peasant whose status will go from poor to starving if the peso collapses. You could have been born a Bosnian Muslim who will get killed unless NATO acts. And so on. The paradox of "liberal nationalism" is a moral imagination that is expansive domestically yet comes to a screeching halt at America's borders.

Buchanan, at least, is consistent: all major groups to which he belongs—American, Anglo-Saxon, Christian, heterosexual—are given priority.

There is an appealing tidiness to the nationalist's moral geography. Obviously, the very idea of national government presupposes some bias toward the nation's citizens. Once you start worrying about Mexicans and Bosnians, figuring out when to *stop* worrying about them gets complicated. Well, complexity is the price you pay for having a moral compass that was built sometime after the Middle Ages.

The argument for internationalism is by no means only moral. A starving Mexican peasant may cross the Rio Grande and burden San Diego's social services. Instability in the Balkans can ripple outward. Tariffs yield countertariffs, which yield American unemployment. And so on. Nationalists tend not to see how deeply American self-interest is intertwined with the interests of non-Americans.

I wish Buchanan well—as a candidate for the Republican nomination, at least. Nationalism will probably grow in strength, so we might as well get clear on which party is its natural home. And if a Buchanan nomination, or a Buchanan third-party candidacy, strips the Democratic coalition of some nationalists in the general election, so be it. All we can ask is that appeals to these elements be honest, that Buchanan avoid flagrant distortion. He already has tribal impulses and primitive morality on his side. He shouldn't need phony numbers as well.

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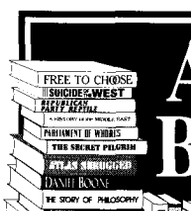

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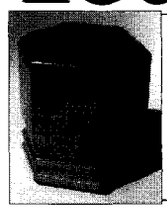

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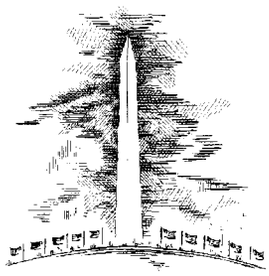
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Leave me alone

I MOVED TO WASHINGTON THIS fall from another East Coast city, which I can't name (I'll tell you why later), for two main reasons. The first is direct mail. One day, I suddenly became the target of an unrelenting barrage of solicitations for political donations and magazine subscriptions. I'm positive that all the mailings came from a single source because all the pitches shared two basic beliefs about me: (1) I am a radical leftist. (2) My first name is spelled "Dagffdh." As this is a fairly serious misspelling, I think I can rule out the possibility that several organizations coincidentally entered the same typo. "We need YOUR HELP, DAGFFDH CHAIT," they would typically implore, "if we are to stop Congress from rolling back all the gains we've made since the 1960s." The solicitations from feminist groups were about evenly divided over whether the main grievance with Congress was that it was too right-wing or just generally a bastion of male phallocentrism. (One letter urged me to help "Neuter Newt," which, I suppose, is a way of getting at both problems.) The letters built up at such a copious rate that I began to contemplate moving. The mystery to me was how I got on these lists in the first place.

IDEOLOGICALLY MISDIRECTED mailings have not stopped since I fled to Washington. TNR recently received an invitation to attend a press conference held by Americans for Tax Reform on the subject of a United Nations scheme to impose global taxation, under which the U.N. "will have the ability to impose taxes on the American public just as the U.S. Congress does." ATR is opposed to this plan on the grounds that it is "a direct violation of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge," an unqualified anti-tax vow the group regularly extracts from Republican candidates. Of course, it would also violate the U.N. charter as well as the concept of sovereignty that forms the basis of international relations, but ATR made no mention of that. The press releases we receive usually tend toward immodesty, but impending world government struck me as particularly newsworthy. As it's my office responsibility to distribute faxes, I delegated coverage of this event to myself, figuring that it would be an occasion for hilarity and free snacks. It was.

WHILE I CONSIDER ATR TO BE A radical organization, it is not by the standards of today's Washington. ATR is one of the more powerful conservative lobbies, and its president, Grover Norquist, is among the select few whose phone calls to Newt Gingrich are returned immediately. Republicans hollered when President Clinton linked their ideology with the Oklahoma City bombing. But ATR's press conference seemed to show precisely where rabid conservatism and delusional paranoia meet. The report on the global taxation scheme came from a journalist named Cliff Kincaid, the sort of person whose work is usually confined, in drastically condensed form, to the letters section of a small-town newspaper. At the press conference, Kincaid pointed the finger at sinister Clinton appointee James Speth, as well as "a number of private groups and foundations." Standing right next to Kincaid was Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes, who warned that "these folks are trying to sneak a world government in behind our backs." A reporter, who turned out to be from the ultra-right *Spotlight*, excitedly asked Kincaid, "Since the Trilateral Commission has long advocated a world government, would you subpoena David Rockefeller to testify?" Kincaid, nodding earnestly, replied, "Actually, I would prefer to subpoena James Speth." Norquist casually mentioned that he had brought up with Gingrich his plan to stop global taxation in Congress, and the Speaker responded warmly. The issue could turn out to be a winner for Republicans. The right wing of the party is now divided between internationalist plutocrats like Steve Forbes and xenophobic populists like Pat Buchanan. Fear of U.N. taxation might be enough to unite them.



THE SECOND REASON FOR MY exodus to Washington was also unwanted mail solicitations, but of a somewhat more compulsory variety. The problem here is a pathological fear of tending to my personal finances. My system is as follows: (1) When a bill arrives, I throw it onto a big pile under my desk. (2) Every few months, I throw the pile out. (3) When a utility is shut off, I call the company and arrange to bring money—I don't have a credit card—to the local check-casher. My former roommate had a similar system, except he threw his bills on the stove, which left open the possibility of incineration and hence skipping step two altogether. Eventually this system provoked a steady stream of mail from utility companies that became even more annoying than the leftist solicitations. Harried by unrelenting demands for money, I left town, telling the utilities that I could be reached at my old office. My former colleagues there continue to keep me abreast of the phone company's angry threats of a ruined credit rating—Oh, no! Not that!—and unspecified legal action. It is to avoid a day of reckoning at the hands of phone company goons that I have chosen not to name my former city of residence.

I DIDN'T THINK MY FINANCIAL pathology would have any consequences until last summer, when it cost me a chance to write for *The New York Times*. I had earlier written an article in another newspaper, the point of which was to contrast the benevolence of local government in Michigan, my state of origin, with the hostility of the local government in my new home out east. An editor at the *Times* business section read it and invited me to contribute to a new column she was overseeing. The catch: the column was supposed to provide useful advice about keeping track of your personal finances. Although embittered by the irony that my one chance to write for the *Times* had to be on the subject I was least qualified—indeed, perhaps *uniquely* unqualified—to hold forth on, I of course accepted the assignment. My first instinct was to fabricate an elaborately sophisticated method for paying bills. Not surprisingly, this came off as unconvincing. Desperate, I simply turned in a piece arguing for my actual system on its merits: it saves time, you can live without utilities for a couple days, etc. It was summarily rejected.

I'VE NEVER FIGURED OUT THE DAGFFDH question. My ex-roommate, a long-haired, liberal computer programmer living in an overwhelmingly Democratic district, received direct mail from the NRA. How in the world did I get pegged as a man-hating leftist? In the preceding space I have revealed that I attend paranoid rightist political events, I believe that certain governments and corporations are out to get me, I avoid modern technology, I am angry about being denied an opportunity to publish my views in *The New York Times*, and I'm from Michigan. My profile, in other words, is a sort of Tim McVeigh/Unabomber composite. If my former mail tormentors ran a background check, they'd both probably decide to leave me alone.

JONATHAN CHAIT

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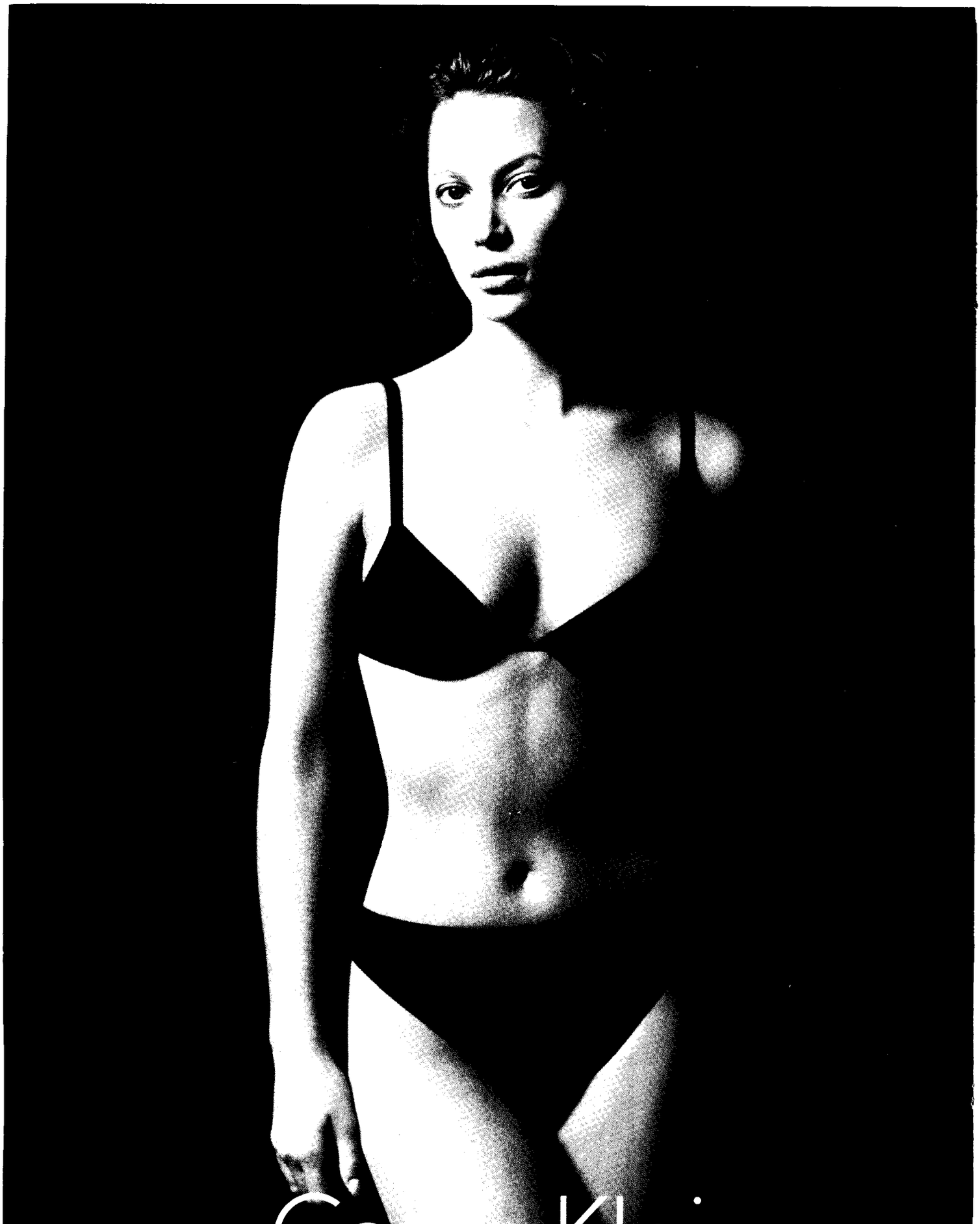

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